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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



September 2010
Spiritual Education
The Humanities and the Social Sciences

Vol. 115, No. 9



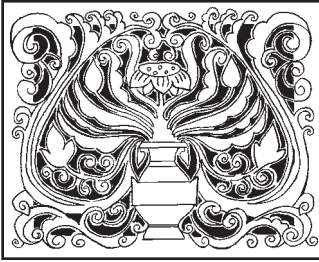
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TRADITIONAL WISDOM

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत । *Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!*

Mind Control

September 2010

Vol. 115, No. 9

यस्त्वविज्ञानवान्भवत्यमनस्कः सदाऽशुचिः ।
न स तत्पदमाप्नोति संसारं चाधिगच्छति ॥

If the intellect, being related to a distracted mind, loses its discrimination and therefore always remains impure, then the embodied soul never attains the goal, but enters into the rounds of births.

(*Katha Upanishad*, 1.3.7)

यस्तु विज्ञानवान्भवति समनस्कः सदा शुचिः ।
स तु तत्पदमाप्नोति यस्माद्भूयो न जायते ॥

If the intellect, being related to a mind that is restrained, possesses discrimination and therefore always remains pure, then the embodied soul attains that goal from which one is not born again.

(1.3.8)

दानं स्वधर्मो नियमो यमश्च श्रुतं च कर्माणि च सद्ब्रतानि ।
सर्वे मनोनिग्रहलक्षणान्ताः परो हि योगो मनसः समाधिः ॥

Charity, discharge of one's duties, tranquillity of the mind and the senses, study of scriptures, various kinds of rituals and vows—all these have control of the mind as their one object. Subjugation of the mind is samadhi. It is the highest yoga.

(*Bhagavata*, 11.23.46)

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥

Doubtless, O mighty-armed, the mind is intractable and restless; but by practice and detachment, O son of Kunti, it can be controlled.

(*Bhagavadgita*, 6.35)

The purer the mind, the easier it is to control. Purity of the mind must be insisted upon if you would control it. ... Perfect morality is the all in all of complete control over mind. The man who is perfectly moral has nothing more to do; he is free.

(*Swami Vivekananda*)

THIS MONTH

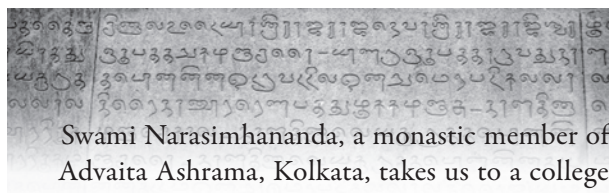
Vedic Education was characterized by an emphasis on human development aiming at mundane as well as transcendental goals and was carried out in an ambience valuing knowledge. As we look at some issues in education in this number, we see the need to recapture the Vedic spirit.

The ethical and spiritual dimensions remain largely neglected in today's educational systems for a host of reasons. Swami Harshananda, President, Ramakrishna Math, Bengaluru, tells us why **Spiritual Education** is important and how it can be fruitfully carried out.



Though these are crucial components of a community's identity as well as vitality, **The Humanities and the Social Sciences in Indian Universities** remain subjugated to other disciplines and dominated by non-indigenous methodologies. Dr Kapil Kapoor, former professor of English and Sanskrit studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, argues why this situation needs to be urgently rectified.

V Srinivas, CEO and Lead Researcher, Illumine Knowledge Resources, Mumbai, presents a compelling model for 'man-making' education within the existing school system in **From Teaching to Enabling Assimilation**.



Swami Narasimhananda, a monastic member of Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, takes us to a college classroom to introduce **The Forerunners of Malayalam Literature**.

A Bud Unfolds is a story about conflict of interests between a youth and her parents. Dr Alpana Ghose, former Head, Department of Chemistry, Ranchi Women's College, shows how such situations can be handled sympathetically.



Dr Kalyan Kumar Chakravarty, Vice Chairman, Delhi Institute of Heritage Research and Management, New Delhi, concludes his call for **Renewal of a Trans-Himalayan Dialogue** by proposing cultural sharing and cooperation in research and conservation as a solution to the current civilizational crisis.

Swami Prabhavananda, founder Minister-in-Charge, Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood, recounts the attitudes towards austerity, work, spiritual training and service of **Swami Brahmananda**, Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual son.

In the seventh instalment of **Vedanta-sara** Swami Bhaskareswarananda, former President, Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur, elucidates the nature of the 'causal body' associated with Ishvara and the collective and individual aspects of ignorance.



Mahendranath Gupta: Last Days with Sri Ramakrishna is a record of events in the last year of Sri Ramakrishna's life, largely translated from Bengali sources by Swami Chetananda, Minister-in-Charge, Vedanta Society of St Louis.

Vedic Education

THE PROSE ROMANCE *KADAMBARI* MAKES a delightful exclusive specification of the features of Rishi Jabali's ashrama, where 'the killing of *shakuni* was confined to the Mahabharata; the expressions of wind, *vayu-pralapitam*, to the Puranas; teeth, *dvija*, fell [only] in old age; inactivity, *jadya*, was seen among sandalwood trees in the woods; the fires, *agnin*, [alone] rested on the earth; [only] the deer, *enakah*, were addicted to music; peacocks, *shikhandinah*, were in favour of dancing; snakes were possessed of hoods, *bhoga*; monkeys were fond of bel fruits—*sriphala*, "Lakshmi's fruit"—and roots had a downward course, *adhogati*.'

Playing on the multiple meanings of Sanskrit terms—vultures are called *shakuni*, a name also borne by the scheming Kaurava uncle; *vayu* is both a deity and the humour responsible for nervous disorders; *dvija* refers both to teeth and to initiates—Banabhatta paints a picturesque image of an ashrama amidst sylvan settings with disciplined inmates, healthy in body and mind, living in harmony with nature and its creatures, and pursuing supra-mundane goals.

This fictional account is probably not very far from the actual realities of the ashramas of Vedic and post-Vedic times—ashramas that were seats of education and culture, both spiritual and secular. The hermitages of such rishis as Shaunaka, Vyasa, and Kanva were virtually forest universities—a whole concourse of ashramas teaching numerous disciplines. These far-famed hermitages attracted scholars, brahmacharins, and rishis from far and near and were the sites of great intellectual and spiritual ferment.

Pursuit of knowledge and wisdom was facilitated by the *gurukula* system, where the homes and ashramas of rishis and scholars were open to stu-

dents for residential study. The mandatory nature of *upanayana*, investiture with a sacred thread from a guru, with its attendant study, ensured that at least among the brahmanas, kshatriyas, and vaishyas both boys and girls received elementary education.

A fundamental principle of Vedic education was tapas. Control and concentration of mind and senses was considered the highest tapas. Concentration, however, is only one component in the training of the will. The other, and equally important aspect, is detachment. The Vedic student had the first lesson in detachment in leaving home to live with the guru's family. The brahmacharya code, which every student abided by, furthered it.

Strict adherence to satya, truth, was another vital facet of Vedic tapas. According to Satyavacha Rathatari of the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, truth is all that needs to be cultivated. The great fidelity with which Vedic texts were orally transmitted and their contributing rishis faithfully acknowledged is one evidence of the immense stress laid upon truthfulness and integrity. Honesty in mundane dealings was recognized as the cornerstone which the pursuit of higher truths had inevitably to be based upon.

Vedic study was almost exclusively oral. But mastering the vast corpus of Vedic texts and associated literature was not merely a feat of memory. Regular recitation with stress on correct intonation and phonetic and metrical accuracy provided students with early deep insights into linguistic laws and generative grammar, which is best captured in Panini's remarkably comprehensive and succinct work *Ashtadhyayi*. Diverse ways of recitation of the same text—the *pada*, *krama*, *jata*, and *ghana pathas*, and the like—not only ensured accuracy of transmission of texts from teacher to student but also aided concentration and assisted grasp of metre and

melody. Every Vedic student was thus a poet. But Vedic poetry was no ordinary poetry, and the mantras not merely 'rules without meaning.' Being the product of the deep insights of Vedic rishis into the nature of Reality, they provided students with an orientation to Reality that made values meaningful and life harmonious and goal-directed.


Vedic study emphasized love of learning. Naka Maudgalya of the *Taittiriya Upanishad* asserted that learning and teaching indeed constituted tapas. Acharya Shankara elaborates: 'Learning and teaching are mentioned in all the contexts in order to imply that these two are to be carefully practised even by one who is engaged in all these duties [of a householder]; for the comprehension of meaning is dependent on study, and the supreme goal [emancipation] is dependent on the understanding of meaning.'

This love of learning took students great distances in search of suitable teachers and institutions for study, discussion, and debate. The courts of kings like Janaka of Mithila, Ajatashatru of Varanasi, and Pravahana Jaivali of Panchala were abuzz with discussions on topics ranging from procedures of daily ritual to the knowledge of supreme Brahman. Bhujyu Lahyayani, one of the reputed scholars at Janaka's court, had travelled along with fellow students to the far-off country of the Madras in north-west India. Jivaka, the most reputed Indian physician of Buddha's time, also undertook a similar journey from Rajagriha to Takshashila to study medicine under a 'world-renowned physician'. After having studied for seven years Jivaka asked his teacher 'when his studies might be regarded as completed'. The teacher said, 'Take this spade and seek round about Takshashila a *yojana* on every side, and whatever plant you see which is not medicinal, bring it to me.' Jivaka went about the task with diligence, but could not find a single plant that lacked all medicinal properties. When he mentioned this to his teacher, the latter certified his eligibility for independent practice.

Medical practitioners of Jivaka's time were expected to be 'well-read in the texts of the medical

Shastras (*adhita-shastra*); well up in the imports of the texts studied; skilled in practical work or surgical operations (like *cheda* and *sneha*); full of resourcefulness and originality (*svayamkriti*); possessed of light touch and swift hand (*laghu-hasta*); clean; of an optimistic temperament or cheerful spirits (*shura* or *vishadarahita*); ready with all necessities and materials for treatment (*sajjopaskara-bheshaja*); of a resourceful mind; of keen intellect; possessed of professional experience (*vyavasayi*); learned in theory; and devoted to truth and morality.' That Jivaka amply met all these requirements is attested by the anecdotes of his remarkable medical, surgical, and humanitarian accomplishments.

The variety of disciplines available for study is indicated by the many departments present in a full-fledged educational institution of the Mahabharata times. These included: (i) Agni-sthana, for fire worship and prayers; (ii) Brahma-sthana, for Vedic studies; (iii) Vishnu-sthana, for study of *raja-niti*, politics, *artha-niti*, economics, and *varta*, agriculture and trade; (iv) Vivasvata-sthana, for astronomy; (v) Soma-sthana, for botany; (vi) Garuda-sthana, for training in transport and communications; and (vii) Mahendra-sthana and Kartikeya-sthana, for various aspects of military training. Primary education in the late and post-Vedic period was comprehensive. Xuanzang noted that after being formally acquainted with the Sanskrit language through the *Siddham* 'children were introduced at the age of seven to the "great Shastras of the Five Sciences", viz, *vyakarana* (grammar), *shilpasthana-vidya* (the science of arts and crafts), *chikitsa-vidya* (science of medicine), *hetu-vidya* (Nyaya, logic, science of reasoning), and *adhyatma-vidya* (inner science [spirituality])'.

Here is a picture of a society that valued knowledge. The greatest of Vedic treasures was, of course, the knowledge of Brahman, 'knowing which all else is known', gaining which one transcends sorrow, becomes perfectly contented, goes beyond fear, and attains immortality. For providing him with this knowledge, King Janaka gave his entire kingdom along with himself to Yajnavalkya, his teacher. Vedic wisdom was priceless. It remains so even today. 



Spiritual Education

Swami Harshananda

A GOOD EDUCATION IS the panacea for all evils. It should aim at an all-round development of the human personality involving each of its diverse aspects: body, speech, intellect, heart, and spirit. Since all these aspects are closely interconnected, attempts at their development should proceed simultaneously and not step by step. Therefore, education is the training that a society imparts to its members so that they become well integrated at personal level and attain harmony at social level. This article focuses on the spiritual dimension of education and has been written mainly from the Hindu viewpoint. People of other faiths may adopt whatever portion agrees with their views and supplement it with their own ideas.

Need for Ethical Values

If a person is taught how to use a device but not when to use it and when not, it can lead to disaster. For instance, a soldier well trained to wield a gun may shoot indiscriminately, killing innocent persons, if he is not taught the 'when' of its use. This shows that the cultivation of moral and ethical values, both at personal and social levels, is a must.

A multi-storey building is very useful, especially when floor space is limited. It is also true that the various storeys, including the ground floor, cannot be built without a strong foundation. Similar is the case with the structure of our life. The spir-

itual aspect of our personality cannot be developed before developing the other aspects: the physical, the intellectual, and the emotional, in that order. Physique can be developed and shaped by nutritious food and systematic exercise. Intellect can be expanded and sharpened by proper study, reflection, exchange of thoughts, and problem solving. The emotional aspect of personality can be trained by deep thinking and analysis of the positive and negative face of each emotion—love, hatred, and the like—and regularly using the will to direct the same towards healthy channels.

Though this threefold development of the personality is necessary, it is not sufficient. One more dimension, of morality and ethics, has to be added to make it more wholesome. It is here that the *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali comes to our aid.

Patanjali has outlined eight graded steps of spiritual discipline that lead to samadhi. Samadhi is the eighth and final step, wherein mystical union of the individual self with the supreme Self is experienced.¹ The first two steps of this spiritual ladder, *yama* and *niyama*, unfold before us a whole philosophy of morality and ethics, combining both personal and social values.

Yama, restraint, consists of five limbs: ahimsa, non-injury; satya, truth; *asteya*, non-stealing; brahmacharya, continence; and *aparigraha*, non-acceptance of gifts. *Niyama*, observances, includes

the following: *shaucha*, cleanliness; *santosha*, contentment; *tapas*, austerity of body, speech, and mind; *svadhyaya*, study of scriptures and repetition of mantras; and *ishvara-pranidhana*, devotion to God. The former virtues contribute to social harmony and the latter to personal purity. Under ideal conditions these two together can lead to the creation of a perfect society.

Fulfilment through Spiritual Education

The inculcation of moral and ethical values, though necessary, is again not sufficient. This can be explained with an illustration:

The *Manu Smriti* eulogises *dana*, gift, as the greatest of all meritorious deeds in this Kali Yuga.² This *dana* is of four types: *anna dana*, gift of food; *prana dana*, gift of 'life' through medicines, diet, and treatment; *vidya dana*, gift of secular education; and *jnana dana*, gift of spiritual wisdom, ultimately resulting in moksha, liberation from the transmigratory existence.

Anna dana satiates a hungry person; *prana dana* restores health to a sick man. However, both these persons are prone to become hungry or fall sick again. It is here that *vidya dana* plays a constructive role by making them earn enough wealth and lead a clean life, thereby keeping them above physical wants and sickness. But hunger and sickness are not the only problems of life. There are enough other problems that can drive a person to the brink of madness. It is *jnana dana* in the form of spiritual wisdom alone that can equip one to face these and, ultimately, all other problems of life.

How this can be achieved may be demonstrated through a story. Two young boys were playing in a flower garden. Adjacent to it, and separated by a compound wall, was a fruit garden. Out of curiosity the boys came up to the wall and managed to peep over it. To their pleasant surprise, they found many ripe fruits lying on the ground across the wall. Though they tried to scale the wall, they could not. Disappointed, one boy started weeping and left the place. The other boy, however, discovered an old wooden box lying below a tree. He managed

to push it to the wall, scaled the wall with this aid, descended on the other side, and enjoyed the juicy fruits to his heart's content.

But this is only half the story. After a few years, both the boys had grown into young adults, whereas the wall had not grown! Hence, it was no more an obstacle to them. Life is full of problems. Some people are conquered by the problems, whereas those who are more enterprising can manage to overcome and eventually outgrow them.

Life being constantly subject to vicissitudes, the problems that we have to face are never-ending. And they are sure to upset us. If, on the other hand, our mind is so trained that it reaches higher levels wherein no problem can ever trouble it, our task is done. This is exactly what spiritual education is expected to do.

What Is Spiritual Education?

The word 'spirit' has been used here to indicate the Atman—Brahman or God—residing in the heart of every being. 'Spiritual education', therefore, refers to the particular training that enables people to directly experience their real nature, the Atman. This takes us to the field of practical religion involving spiritual discipline.

Introduction of spiritual education as a general subject at school and college levels may appear to be too idealistic and hence impractical. But the knowledge that it was part and parcel of the ancient *gurukula* system of education should dispel this doubt. The best, and also time-tested, method of imparting spiritual education is through two well-known disciplines: *jnana marga*, path of knowledge, and *bhakti marga*, path of devotion. Let us take a brief look at these two paths.

Jnana marga, or *jnana yoga*, is primarily concerned with purifying the intellect and directing it towards the Atman within. *Bhakti marga*, or *bhakti yoga*, on the other hand, helps in purifying the emotional aspects of our personality and directing it towards God—the personal aspect of Brahman, also identified with the Atman in Advaita Vedanta. Though these two paths appear to start from differ-

ent locations, they converge on the same end: *sattva-ananda* or *brahmananda*, the highest blissful mystical experience of unity of the individual soul with the supreme Soul.

Jnana marga has two stages: *sadhana chatusthaya* and *shravanadi tritaya*. *Sadhana chatusthaya*, the fourfold path of *sadhana*, consists of the following steps: (i) *viveka*, discernment between the real and the unreal; (ii) *vairagya*, renunciation, the spirit of detachment; (iii) *shamadi shatka*, consisting of *shama*, tranquillity, *dama*, self-control, *uparati*, restraint of external organs from the pursuit of sense-objects, *titiksha*, endurance, *samadhana*, concentration, and *shraddha*, faith; and (iv) *munukshutva*, desire for liberation from transmigratory existence. Once aspirants attain this fourfold discipline, they are expected to go to a competent teacher for further *sadhana*.

The second stage, *shravanadi tritaya*, comprises the following three steps: (i) *shravana*, hearing from the guru the teachings of the Upanishads regarding one's true nature, as the Atman beyond all limitations of the body-mind complex; (ii) *manana*, reflecting upon these teachings, clearing all doubts that may arise in the mind, and coming to a definite conclusion about the ultimate Truth—the true nature of the Atman and its identity with Brahman; (iii) *nididhyasana*, meditation on the Atman and its identity with Brahman. This will ultimately result in the direct experience of that identity.

Bhakti marga is the other path of *sadhana*. It is primarily oriented towards love of God in the personal aspect—devotion towards such deities as Rama, Krishna, Shiva, or Devi, the Divine Mother. Meditation on any one of these forms—voluntarily chosen and termed *ishta devata*, Chosen Deity—along with japa of the mantra or the divine name of that deity is the main discipline in this path. Chanting and singing of devotional hymns, listening to religious discourses, ritualistic worship of the deity, visiting places of pilgrimage, and service to holy persons are some of the other disciplines associated with it. The mantra to be used in japa has to be ceremonially received from a qualified guru.

How to Impart Spiritual Education Today

Since the very concept of spiritual education originated from the Vedic seers, we are obliged to go back to their system, the *gurukula*, which withstood the vagaries of time and worked for several millennia. The backbone of the system was the principle that true education has to be 'caught' rather than 'taught'. Hence, great emphasis was laid on education being completely residential. Quantitatively, education today has expanded enormously; it is almost impossible to bring back the old residential system *in toto*. However, the possibilities of introducing it, at least partially, in some selected institutions ought to be considered seriously.

Moral and spiritual values are to be imparted to children even at the pre-primary and primary stages, though the methods should be suitably adapted to the particular stage of the child's development. Teaching short and simple stories picked from well-known works like the *Panchatantra* and the *Hitopadesha* will be of great help. Animation films of these stories should be especially produced to make the teaching more effective.

In the next stage—secondary level—study of biographies of great persons, especially of saints, can be inspiring. Here too the cinema industry can offer invaluable assistance. It is undeniable that what is seen with the eyes has a much greater effect on the mind than what is read in books. This has been amply demonstrated by the hugely popular telefilm *Ramayana*, produced very ably by Ramanand Sagar. If such telefilms, spread over ten to twenty episodes, on the lives of great persons from India as also other countries are produced and shown to the students as part of the curriculum, it will surely have a remarkable effect. Brief selections from the scriptures of world religions may also be prescribed for study. However, the passages should be so chosen as to deal, directly or indirectly, with the control of mind and emotions. These can be backed up by teaching simple methods of concentration adopted from the science of yoga.

(Continued on page 532)



The Humanities and the Social Sciences in Indian Universities

Dr Kapil Kapoor

THE DISCIPLINARY FORMATIONS initially borrowed from Great Britain in the nineteenth century continue to be the bases of the faculties in Indian universities. In the second half of the twentieth century, with the US becoming the dominant power after World War II, we saw the addition, under growing American influence, of some new disciplines such as language teaching, linguistics, and psychology—subjects that had broken away from their parent disciplines: literature, philology, and philosophy. The following basic disciplinary formations, however, remained unchanged: i) faculty of the arts / humanities, ii) faculty of the social sciences, and iii) faculty of science. These were later followed by the faculty of engineering, and the faculty of medicine.

While the faculty of science has been growing and developing any number of new disciplines—electronics, astrophysics, information technology, space technology, missile technology, and many more—the humanities and the social sciences have been stagnating, even deteriorating. Religious studies, for example, have long been introduced in British universities, but continue to be absent in India, which is a pity, as religion is the largest social formation in every society. With the social sciences and the humanities becoming more and more peripheral in India, as elsewhere, their contribution is turning to be less affirmative and more conflict-promotion oriented. This is so because the social sciences and the humanities as taught in India are not rooted in her local cultures, and theoretical frames that are used to study them are borrowed

from cultures that have looked upon progress as a product of conflict.

The Social Sciences Revisited

Today the disciplines counted as the social sciences include, among others, the following: anthropology, geology, geography, psychology, sociology, history, education, social medicine and community health, political science, commerce, and management. The designation 'social sciences' is very suggestive; it i) acknowledges the Anglo-American opposition between 'science' and 'arts'; ii) denies the possibility of, say, a science of painting or music; iii) invests 'science', 'scientific knowledge', and its methodology with a prestige that, by implication, degrades the humanities and the arts. The 'social sciences' has also become a 'holdall' term comprising disciplines that, in some other taxonomies, would belong to different categories or may not constitute independent subjects of study at all or which, as they develop, 'overflow' into allied areas. In a lighter vein, of course, it makes other academic pursuits, such as that of literature, anti-social!

All this is true of the humanities as well; they are perceived as disciplines farthest from 'science' and therefore least rational and, in the rampant utilitarian view, least useful for 'struggling, suffering people'. And some disciplines have been moving out of the domain of the humanities and emerging as semi-respectable social science—semi-respectable because it is still not 'science'.

There is such a close interrelation between disciplines like commerce and economics, political

science and sociology, psychology and education, and others that it is not possible to study them as autonomous subjects. This awareness has been growing of late, and at present interdisciplinary studies have become an overriding academic principle and practice.

It is easy to see that the social sciences in India are losing their definition, their connectivity with the felt needs of society. New areas of study having more connectivity with the immediate society are emerging—actually, they continue to operate under the old rubrics but have only tenuous bases in the ‘old’ disciplines. Such emerging ‘social sciences’ for Indian realities include women as knowledge and energy resource, integrated water-land-dairy management, microfinance, integrated energy resource management, organic farming and marketing, development paradigms and ecology, urbanization, population, mechanization and employment, and women cooperatives management.

These emerging areas of study are multidisciplinary and outside the given strict definitions of the social sciences. Till now, these were being taken up by non-university, non-governmental sectors, but are beginning to be incorporated in the disciplines of management, commerce, and social work—this being a relatively new social science having a strong nexus with the emerging areas of work and study. That the social sciences have to now deal with these apparently idiosyncratic areas becomes clear when we randomly review, for example, themes taken up in the last five years by important research journals such as the *Journal of Social Science Research* and the *E-Journal of Social Science*: India’s ecological heritage, India’s tribal heritage, global financial crisis and its impact on India, metaphysics and the challenge of logical positivism, female migration and urban informal sector, alternative development paradigm for Africa, geoinformatics in agricultural development, management of the democratization process, sibling relationship, educating adolescent girls and young women on family life issues, juvenile delinquency, barriers to educational development of scheduled caste students, social implications of

electronic commerce, health awareness of rural adolescent girls, work participation among the disabled in India, parenting in single parent and intact families, public administration paradigm shift, involvement of women in direct selling enterprises, single mothers, childlessness, team leadership and team commitment, contemporary women artists, banking finance and macroeconomics, representation of women in urban government, memory and locality, history of emotions, demography and economy of tribals in Jharkhand, ideas of the city, economic history, modern historiography.

The following e-journal themes further reinforce the pattern of diverse heterogeneous issues that cut across disciplinary boundaries: agricultural commodities, agriculture, China: explorations and analyses, ethics in the social sciences, focus on SAARC countries, infant and child health, infant and child mortality in India, international trade, microfinance: research roundup, public finance, rivers, dams and people, school education, urban development and displacement, urban world: bridging the urban divide, women and health.

These subjects do not figure in routine sociology, economics, commerce, psychology, or history courses. One clear conclusion that we may draw is that the issues of the classical social sciences have little, if anything, to do with the societal dynamics of present-day India. This is also true of the current university education as a whole, and it is this disjunction that is turning Indian universities into islands of doubly alienated people—alienated from their intellectual traditions and from their social and natural environment.

The Neglected Humanities

The humanities, however, retain their definition; the arts are closely allied, if not actually belonging to the same domain, and that is the humanities’ strength: the idea of beauty, a certain symmetry or justice, permeating all its discourses, whatever the field—philosophy, aesthetics, literature, music, or painting. From the beginning, from Plato in the West and the much older Upanishads in India,

one stream of human inquiry has delved into the mind and the heart: thoughts and emotions. This object of knowledge is perennial, because while the structure of a mechanism or society can change and evolve, the structure of the human being *per se* has remained virtually unchanged. Thus, the social sciences have been changing along with changing social forms and ways, as has been technology in general, but not the physical sciences—the latter can grow in their fund of knowledge, but are not essentially redefined, because their object of study, the physical reality, is constant.

But in the livelihood-oriented, empirically driven, utilitarian world of today's India, the humanities are the last options for aspiring university entrants—the best minds seem to go to commerce, and takers of philosophy are but a few. We can only bemoan with Goldsmith: 'Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey, / Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.'

The neglect of the humanities is dangerous for the human order. Prof. Sheldon Pollock, who has been appointed as general editor for the multimillion dollar humanities project of Indian classics at Harvard University, endowed by Infosys magnate Narayana Murthy, justifies this huge endowment for something other than poverty and disease alleviation in a recent interview: 'Without "the humanities", how human are we? What would it mean to win the world and lose one's soul?'¹

Under the term 'the humanities', we count philosophy, literature, languages, aesthetics, music, drama, dance and folk arts, and other performances. In Indian universities, in the study of these disciplines too there is a disjunction between the actual life of people and the academics. Thus, for example, the School of Arts and Aesthetics in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has little room or time for Indian arts or performances, except as saleable packaged commodities for Western audiences. Besides, Indian theories are conspicuous by their absence—just look at the courses and the readings, prescribed or advised, for those courses and you are in the familiar Indian academic ambience of

young minds being brought up on a special 'imported' diet, receiving learning with nothing to give in return.

In English literature departments all over the country the goals and methods in language teaching have been redefined with amazing rapidity to keep up with the changing fashions in 'theory': limited learning and limited ability in the languages are accepted as legitimate goals; the formulation that language is a 'habit' threw out grammar, adopted mechanical drill and pattern-practice, and ended up training people to wag their tongues without using their minds! This acceptance of foreign methodologies has percolated into the study of Indian languages as well; no surprise therefore that 'it is a truth universally acknowledged' that standards of language learning have fallen abysmally, and are still falling.

In literary studies we have witnessed two developments:

(i) A loss of autonomy in the new post-independence euphoria of 'development' and 'reform', in which literature has become a handmaiden of the social sciences and literary texts have been reduced to the status of 'documents' for one or the other thesis of the social 'scientists'.

(ii) As a consequence of the loss of autonomy, literary texts came to be increasingly read in a consumerist manner; texts are no more read for the reading experience but are fished for 'incriminating' material. This is demanded by the sociological or historicist readings of literature, where texts are not 'read' so much as 'talked about', theorized. The result is that at present we talk about the texts rather than absorb them for what they are. 'Theory' is at the centre of literature syllabi now, and the theory 'done'—that is the right verb—in India is the hegemonic Anglo-American, more American than Anglo, theory that has served as an instrument of the missionary politics of globalization, a euphemism for financial evangelism.²

The immediate outcome of these tendencies is the lack of clarity about what an English department in India should be doing at a time when the

humanities in particular are being made increasingly irrelevant and education is becoming 'vocalized'. Secondly, all research gets clustered round a few 'popular'³ borrowed theoretical frames or theories, reducing their range and limiting their freshness, as well as putting a question mark on their relevance.

One must examine the role and impact of borrowed theories both in language teaching and in literature. English language teaching theories have promoted business; with every new theory, a new technology—from spool recorders to CDs, besides several intermediate products—and a new package of teaching materials become saleable periodically every three or four years. Universities have laboratories that are also scrapyards for expensive unutilized or underutilized equipment and their libraries are full of language course books that have been rarely, if at all, used. But it has always been good business. In the process, language learning got delinked from thinking, as language now came to be defined not as cognition but as communication—a means of transferring information rather than a mode of communion.

In literature 'theory' has had an equally deleterious effect. As we had noted elsewhere,⁴ American theories ranging from the structuralist to the post-modern—essentially metropolitan, ethnographic, and supremacist—have promoted divisiveness in Indian society and reduced Indian reality to the status of mere data. All such theories, with their embedded drivers of 'origins' and 'evolution', are structured as conflict models.⁵ Their ethnographic parameter of 'difference', perhaps necessary to break through the straitjacket of uncompromising Hebraic monotheism, is counterproductive in a pluralistic and pluri-theistic Indian society, which needs for its harmonious existence synthesizing universalism rather than *bheda buddhi*, discriminatory intellect—a kind of intellect that has always been considered in the Indian intellectual tradition to be of a lower form, one produced by *avidya*, ignorance.

Therefore, when we uncritically adopt Western theories, we are unwittingly undercutting India's

unity as well as alienating ourselves from our own thought. We must evaluate the impact of these theories on Indian society, reflect on the real felt needs of our people, and ponder whether these needs are actually being served or thwarted by these divisive, difference-oriented, 'evolutionary', apparently reformist, and certainly supremacist theories.

Acculturation of the Educational System

As part of the mainstream educational system both the humanities and the social sciences suffer from the known disabilities of the system, Anglo-American centrism being the most obvious and disabling constraint. That there is something fundamentally wrong with the Indian educational system was noted by Ananda Coomaraswamy in the thirties and even earlier by Max Müller. In *What India Can Teach Us* Müller said that Hindu intellectuals are always at pains to be dismissive about and to distance themselves from their own learning and intellectual tradition. Coomaraswamy, in his *Dance of Shiva*, refers to 'educated Indians' with the following footnote: 'That is how the victims of Indian education are described.' In the mainstream educational system of India all knowledge is presented as coming from the West, implying that India never produced any worthwhile knowledge. This education has little to do with the environment or with the cultural and intellectual traditions of India. India has often been rightly described as primarily agricultural, *krishi-pradhana*, and rural, but the subject matter of the social sciences in India is based on an urban vision—its discussions and assumptions are those of a self-seeking urban society—and has very little to do with the rural way of life. With its imperative of 'modernization', this education promotes a materialistic and an atheistic way of life in what was always been recognized as a morally-oriented, *dharma-pradhana*, society.

To achieve the goals of this non-indigenous educational system the Indian intellectual traditions of learning and thought are excluded and marginalized, producing thus generations of young Indian victims of cultural anomie or schizophrenia,



who have contempt for things Indian and admire the 'success'—whatever that may be—of Western civilization; youth that value freedom above self-regulation, indulgence over restraint, and rights rather than duties.

This intellectual subordination of the Indian academy to the Western by establishing a recipient-donor, data-theory relationship is facilitated and strengthened by the complete exclusion of Indian knowledge systems from mainstream syllabi. The humanities and the social sciences are no exception. Examine the reading lists given nowadays by teachers in any of the disciplines listed above: all references and readings are from the West, primarily from the US. This trend was established in the sixties when, following the PL-480 food exchange agreement, a large sum of money became available to the US for funding higher education in India. This and the Ford Foundation grants enabled gifts of American books to Indian university libraries. Moreover, thousands of young ambitious Indian postgraduates were sent to the US, under the Fulbright programme, to work for their doctorates. The flood started returning in the late sixties, and all

those young fellows were directly appointed—such was the prestige of the American degree then—as readers, which is the second level in the three-tier hierarchy of university teachers in India, and many of them came to head different departments. Those 'returned natives' promulgated American theory and methodology and also deferred indefinitely the incorporation of Indian thought in the syllabi.

In linguistics, for example, it was 'phoneme' and 'morpheme' all the way—no room even for Panini, whose 'transformational' credentials had been acknowledged by most eminent Western linguists such as Chomsky, Bloomfield, Firth, and Sweet. It was only in 1978 that the present writer introduced the first course in Indian linguistics in the JNU, but such courses are still only exceptions. Take any discipline—be it philosophy, history, geography, or sociology—and you will find that strong Indian textual traditions are completely out of their syllabi. In philosophy there may be one paper out of eight that has a comparative slant and allows 'Atman' to be compared with 'soul'! In geography there is no room for authentic Puranic or Rig Vedic geography, nor for the geography of the Mahabharata or,

more surprisingly, the geography recorded in such texts as the eighth-century *Kavyamimamsa* of Raja-shekhara, the court poet of Kannauj. In sociology, a discipline apparently devoted to understanding the complex Indian society, there is no room for the long sociological textual tradition of *dharmasutras*, *dharmashastras*, and *nibandhas*. Kautilya and the whole tradition of *nitishastra* have no place in either polity or economy or commerce. There is a two-thousand-year-old continuous cumulative textual tradition in Indian poetics and aesthetics, but the university reading lists painstakingly exclude all Indian thinkers and texts, forgetting that the contemporary 'theory' is a product of the acknowledged 'linguistic turn' brought about by Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of structuralism, who was in fact a professor of Sanskrit in Geneva and was so deeply influenced by Indian thought that, in tune with the Indian philosophy of language, refuted the traditional long-held Western view that language is a representational system, arguing à la Bhartrihari that language is a constructivist system.

This brings us to the methodology of research in the humanities and the social sciences—the empirical sampling method and ethnography. Indian philosophy of knowledge allows space both to empirical and transcendental epistemologies, including, for example, intuition and direct apperception, which has been called 'the yogi's truth'. While accepting reason as an important epistemological category, the Indian mind has not privileged it above all other means of knowledge, such as *shabda pramana*, verbal testimony, and *anubhava*, experience.

The exclusive use of the empirical methodology has hindered a proper understanding of the Indian reality and often distorted the full truth. Indian society had, over the thousands of years of its existence, successfully transcended its multilingual and multi-ethnic reality and welded itself into a cultural polity, transforming itself from a geographic entity, *jambudvipa bharatakhanda*, to a cultural unity, *rashtra*. Once they experienced multiplicity as a consequence of the immigration that followed the end of colonies, Western thinkers foregrounded

ethnicity as the overriding parameter of identity and made it their primary research principle. All of the Ford Foundation funded researchers in the social sciences, both American and Indian, took to ethnographic studies in a big way to produce what I call *tanni-tirtham*,⁶ research to establish what is in fact a motivated political statement that India is not a 'nation' and that her major challenge is 'justice' for the non-mainstream—though the 'mainstream' itself has been questioned and fragmented—the religious or linguistic ethnic minorities. This research therefore is dangerously divisive, as perhaps it was intended to be, and India now is just a conglomerate of communities who by some peculiar logic are all 'victims'.

The attitude of ignoring the vast Indian textual traditions in philosophy, history, polity, commerce, management, and other disciplines has its basis in the absence of such long, attested, continuous, and cumulative textual traditions in the West and in the consequent reliance of Western scholars on literary documents for their historical, social, and cultural research. But this use of literature as a document is not necessitated in the Indian tradition, as it has attested textual traditions, originating from proper disciplinary sources, in most major disciplines. It is unfortunate that the absence of this kind of continuous cumulative traditions in the West is the reason why Indian knowledge systems have been ignored in all of India's educational programmes, not just the social sciences. Almost everything in the Indian tradition challenges the monistic underpinnings of Western thought.⁷ The consequence is an invalid academic exercise and the subversion of Indian thought in the humanities and social sciences departments of Indian universities.

The Solution

What is the solution? It is obvious and stares us in the face: Indian textual traditions of thought should be relocated in the syllabi of Indian universities. But this will not happen, as it has not happened, in the government-controlled mainstream educational system because of what appears to be

a well-considered policy to keep the successive generations ignorant of their roots and heritage of thought so that, ashamed of the intellectual poverty of their culture, they never assert an Indian identity, remain servile to the so-called modernity, and are convincingly driven to keep in perpetual power the class that is perceived by them as the guardian of this modernity, a bulwark against their own 'backward', 'obscurantist', 'non-modern', 'anti-rational' culture. This formula has worked, as Macaulay had predicted in 1836 it will: 'The effect of this [English] education on the Hindoos is prodigious. No Hindoo, who has received this education, ever remains sincerely attached to his religion. It is my firm belief that if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence.'⁸

Is everything lost then? Perhaps no. The solution lies in the breaking of this monolithic mainstream government-controlled educational system. This will happen through the dynamics of burgeoning numbers of aspirants to higher education, so many that the system will not be able to accommodate or handle them. To manage this situation, private universities and colleges free of the straitjacket

of the ruling educational policy will come into being—have already come into being—and these institutions shall be flexible and open-minded, as experience has already shown. In this context, even foreign universities that are on the anvil are to be welcomed, as they will naturally be more curious about and interested in the Indian intellectual traditions. We will have then not one product, not one body of students, but three products and three producers. The hope lies here.

PB

Notes and References

1. Sugata Srinivasaraju, 'Digital Memory', *Outlook*, 10 May 2010.
2. Are the metaphors getting mixed?
3. There may be different and interesting reasons for the 'popularity' of particular theories. The current favourites are nation construction, gender studies (feminism), post-colonialism, and the plight of women in Indian—particularly Hindu—society.
4. See 'English Studies in India' in *English Studies: Indian Perspectives*, ed. Makarand Paranjape (Delhi: Mantra, 2005).
5. In the middle ages it was God against man—God was the adversary. In the Renaissance nature became the adversary. In the Enlightenment religion or belief was the adversary, of reason. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, during industrialization, man became the adversary of man—class war. And now it is woman against man—feminism.
6. *Tanni* and *tirtham*, both Tamil words, mean 'water'. Typically, in socio-linguistic research the two words will be tagged with caste markers: non-brahmanas call 'water' *tanni*, while brahmanas use the word *tirtham*. In this mode, ethnographic research in social sciences establishes difference, *bheda*, and fragments Indian society on the basis of caste, religion, income, profession, gender, and the like, and fails to account how internally diverse systems such as a village or a town or a community, or even the whole society, function as a harmonious whole.
7. See the forthcoming essay 'Concept and Taxonomy of Knowledge' in the series *History of Science, Culture and Civilization*, ed. D P Chattopadhyaya (Delhi: Oxford).
8. A letter written by Lord Macaulay from Calcutta on 12 October 1836 to his father Mr Zachary Macaulay; George Otto Trevelyan, *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* (Echo, 2006), 276.



From Teaching to Enabling Assimilation

V Srinivas

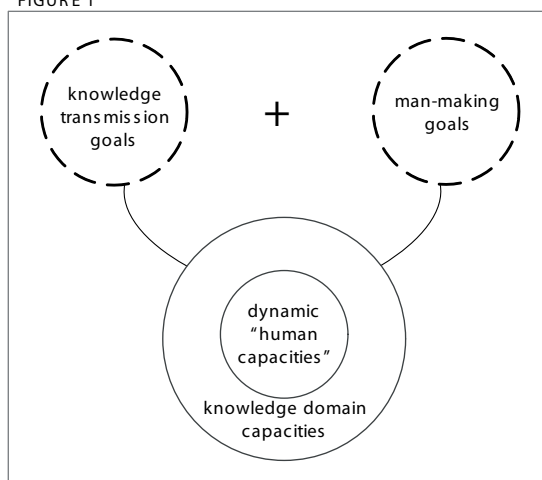
THE IDEAL OF EDUCATION that dominates schooling in India is ‘transmission of knowledge’ from teacher to student. A teacher who lives by this ideal will measure his or her own success through parameters such as acquisition of relevant information by the student, comprehension of concepts and ideas, and application of concepts to various real-life situations. In contrast, a teacher who seeks to live by the ‘man-making ideal’ would use a completely different set of parameters. These parameters would include development of self-esteem, *atma-shraddha*, in the student; growth of the student’s character as well as intellectual and physical capacities—*atma-bala*, *buddhi-bala*, and *bahu-bala*; and awakening of the infinite potential inherent in the student.

In this context let us now examine the challenge we seek to address: How to achieve the goals of the man-making ideal within the context of an existing schooling system that is clearly built on the transmission-of-knowledge ideal? It will be obvious to any teacher who has struggled to reconcile these ideals that the task is difficult for some very obvious reasons: i) the current model of school education, which involves large classrooms, information-centered curricula, and an excessive focus on examination performance; ii) the aspiration of students, and parents, which is built around ‘degree acquisition’ or ‘admission to prestigious institutions’ or ‘job acquisition’ rather than personality and character development; iii) the limitations of teachers themselves, who find the struggle and effort associated with man-making educational practices far too taxing in the context of pressures exerted by school and educational authorities.

How does one, in effect, accomplish the dual goal of developing dynamic human capacities needed for a mature human personality while, at

the same time, master the ‘knowledge-domain capacities’ required by the educational and commercial systems? (See Figure 1).

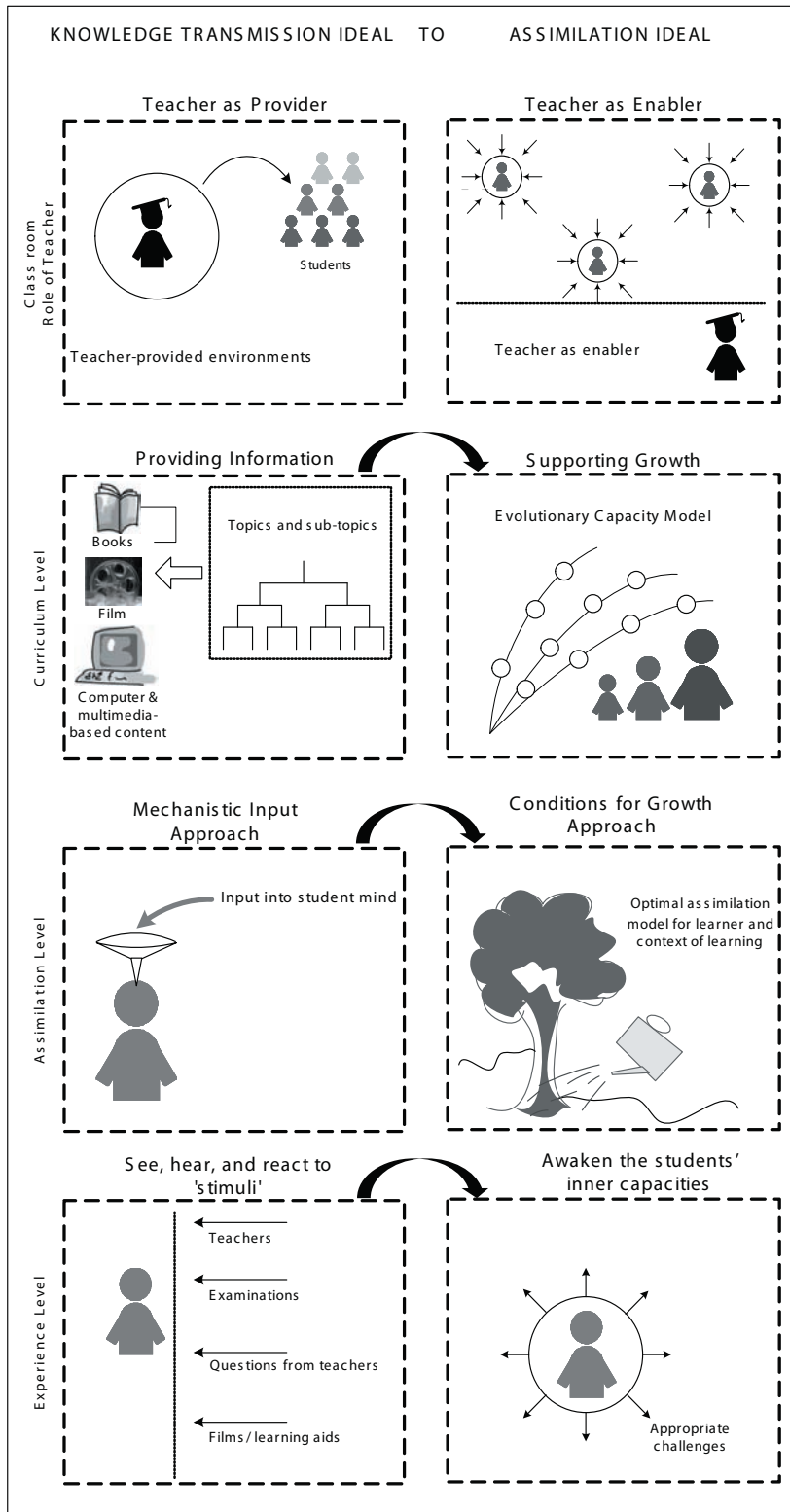
FIGURE 1



Assimilation of Knowledge

This paper proposes that teachers who seek to integrate the man-making ideal into the contemporary educational system could potentially accomplish their objectives if students were able to assimilate knowledge. Assimilation of knowledge means not just comprehension of ideas but the translation of ideas into a transformed human being. Put differently, assimilation of knowledge results in developing the student’s capacity to transform himself, the situation in which he finds himself, and the possibilities open to him by effectively leveraging the ideas and knowledge available to him. However, a school or educational institution that seeks to promote such an assimilation of ideas by its students will need to bring about fundamental shifts in thinking at all levels of the educational design. These shifts are explored next (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2

**Shift 1: Role of the teacher**

From 'teacher as provider' to 'teacher as enabler'. Assimilation means that the responsibility for self-transformation is awakened in the student. This responsibility is invoked when the teacher subtly modifies his or her role in the classroom from 'provider of knowledge' to 'enabler of learning'.

Shift 2: Classroom Context

From 'providing information' to 'supporting growth'. What is communicated by the teacher in the class? In the current educational model teachers elaborate upon what is already available in the textbooks or provide alternate sources of information that may be more relevant and comprehensible. In the assimilation model the teacher provides 'triggers for learning' so that the student's capacity to engage with the subject matter is improved. Such an approach amplifies the teacher's contribution to the educational process and the student's love for and involvement with knowledge and self-development.

Shift 3: Instructional Approach

From 'mechanistic input' to 'conditions for growth'. In the mechanistic-input model information is an asset 'poured into' the student's mind, much as fuel is filled in a motor vehicle. In the conditions-for-growth model knowledge is viewed as a nutrient or catalyst that can invoke, speed up, and ease the student's struggles with knowledge and capacity development.

Shift 4: Educational Experience • From ‘see, hear, and react to stimuli’ to ‘engage with challenges’. Knowledge is born in a space beyond the senses. It is born within the human being, deeper, beyond the senses. The trans-sensory nature of knowledge means that we ought to go beyond the current obsessions with multimedia and multi-sensory educational experiences to create challenges that invoke inner excitement that comes from meeting challenges head-on. The outcome, as in the case of the other shifts, is deeper ownership of knowledge, greater assimilation of ideas, and awakening of the evolutionary potential in the heart of every student.

Practical Models of Education

We now translate these principle-level shifts into a practical model for classroom education. At the heart of this new model is the recognition that the relationship between teacher and student is neither a ‘push’ relationship in which the teacher just gives knowledge to the student nor a ‘pull’ relationship in which the student’s self-effort and practice are the main cause of growth, but it is a ‘sense-respond’ relationship where the teacher enables assimilation of knowledge by the student.

In the assimilation model both teacher and student are seen as ‘co-creators’ of the learning experience. Co-creating involves a journey that brings together teacher and student, who at the beginning of the process are far-off from each other—not in physical or emotional terms, but in terms of knowledge. Through this process they exchange thoughts fluently, until finally teacher and student become one. In this final stage the student undertakes a conscious practice, which the teacher enables, until they become one single entity learning together. This is a vision of education that reflects an ancient Indian tradition: the idea of teacher and student as one single whole, with the teacher enabling the student’s growth and the student growing in the environment provided by the teacher.

Illumine Knowledge Resources, a knowledge-enablement laboratory based in Mumbai, has translated, through its research over the past decade, this vision of assimilation into a simple four-step architected journey used by the teacher or the educational leader to achieve predictable and replicable assimilation outcomes. This model, easily adoptable by any school or educational institution seeking improved quality of education, is described next (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3

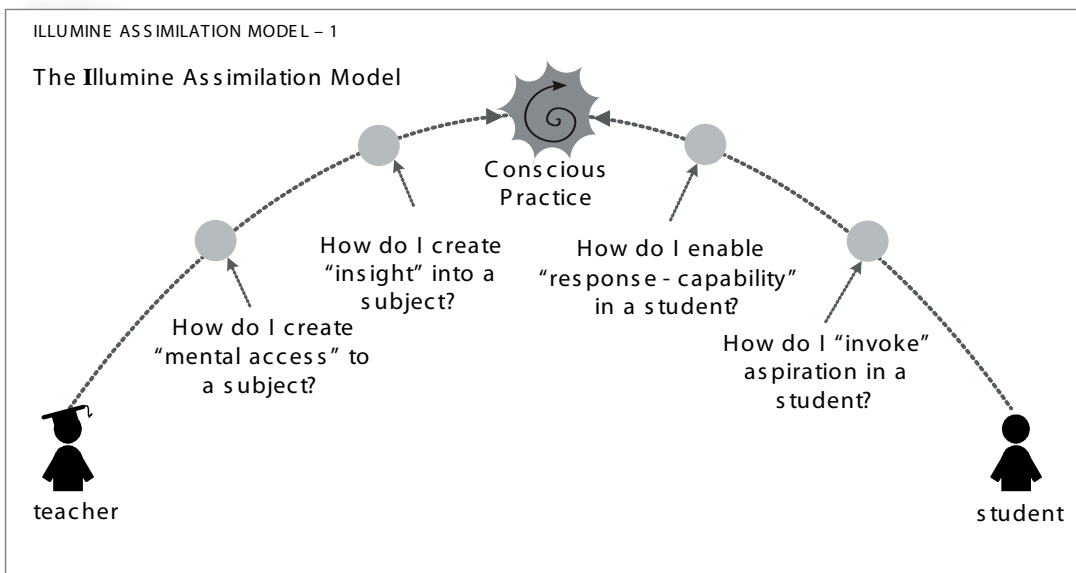
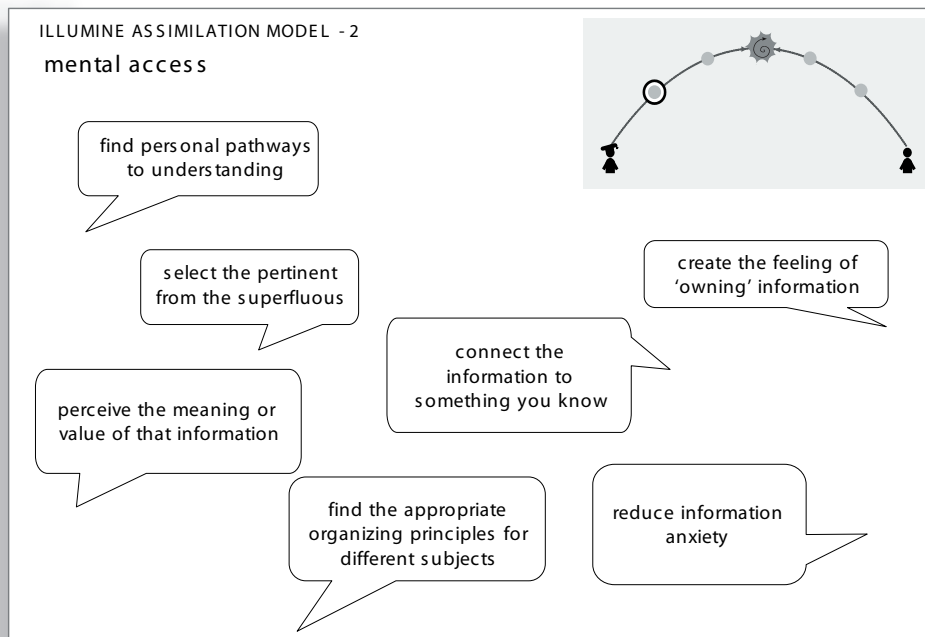


FIGURE 4



The Illumine Assimilation Model says that the teacher in any classroom needs to address the following four key dimensions of the assimilation challenge: i) provide mental access to the subject matter—knowledge transmission goal; ii) invoke aspiration in the student—human capacity goal; iii) create insight into the subject—knowledge transmission goal; iv) support response-capability in the student—human capacity goal. Each of these dimensions is explained in the subsequent sections.

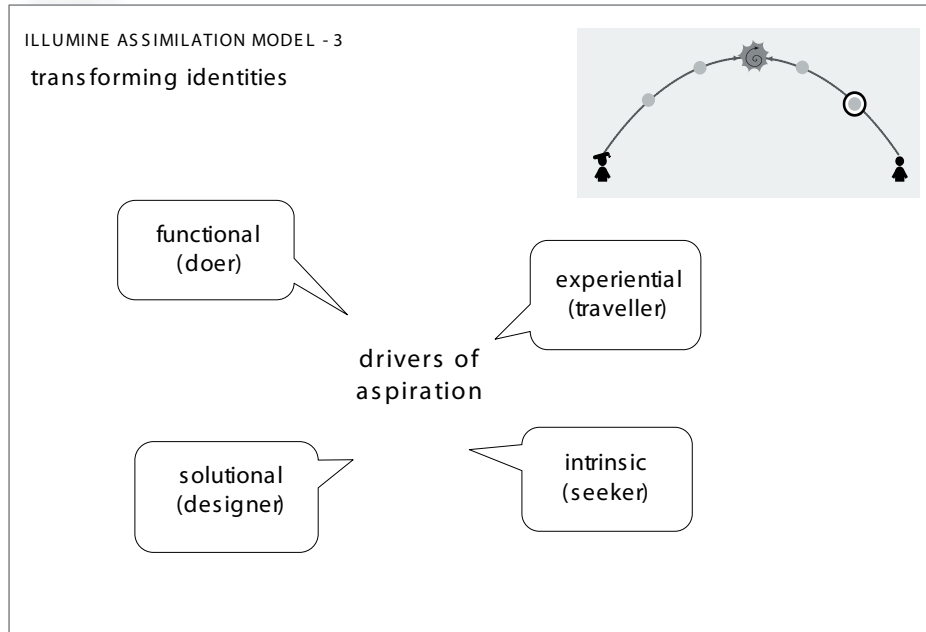
i) Mental Access to the Subject • Firstly, it is important to recognize that 'mental access' is different from 'physical access'. A glaring example of having only physical access to knowledge occurs when a student repeats something verbatim from memory but is unable to explain that subject in his or her own words. Mental access implies providing a means for the student to 'make sense' of the subject matter—in the context of his or her own knowledge and experience. One method of creating mental access is by providing a newcomer with a map. A well-known example is the map of the London underground railway. Visitors to London make sense of London by using this map,

instead of using a geographical map. Figure 4 provides some examples of how a teacher can create mental access to a subject.

ii) Invoking Aspirations • Mental access is not enough, because the student has to aspire to learn. If a student does not seek to learn, there is nothing a teacher can do. Therefore, the next step of the journey is to awaken the student's aspiration. This requires a shift from 'ambition' to 'aspiration'. The surest signal of ambition is the urge to acquire things. If a student wants to merely acquire knowledge, then he or she will never feel like learning and will instead find faster, shorter ways of getting quick results. How is aspiration invoked? A student, in order to aspire for more understanding, more capacity, more assimilation of knowledge, must see the value and purpose of knowledge in the context of his or her deeper identities. Students have different identities with respect to knowledge (see Figure 5).

• A student with a functional identity thinks: 'I am performing the role of a student. My function is to pass an exam, so let me learn what is relevant for the exam.'

FIGURE 5



- A student with an experiential identity thinks: 'I am a traveller. I want to experience knowledge. So, I shall read widely and learn from a wide range of sources and subjects.'

- A student with a solutional identity thinks: 'I have this problem, how do I solve it? Let me search and learn whatever is necessary to be able to design a solution.'

- A student with a seeker identity thinks: 'I seek because I find that knowledge is inherently or intrinsically beautiful. I feel transformed by it.'

- If the student somehow acquires a 'victim identity', he thinks: 'I am a victim of the system, a victim of my teachers, and my parents' requirements.' For such a student, engaging creatively and freely with knowledge becomes very difficult.

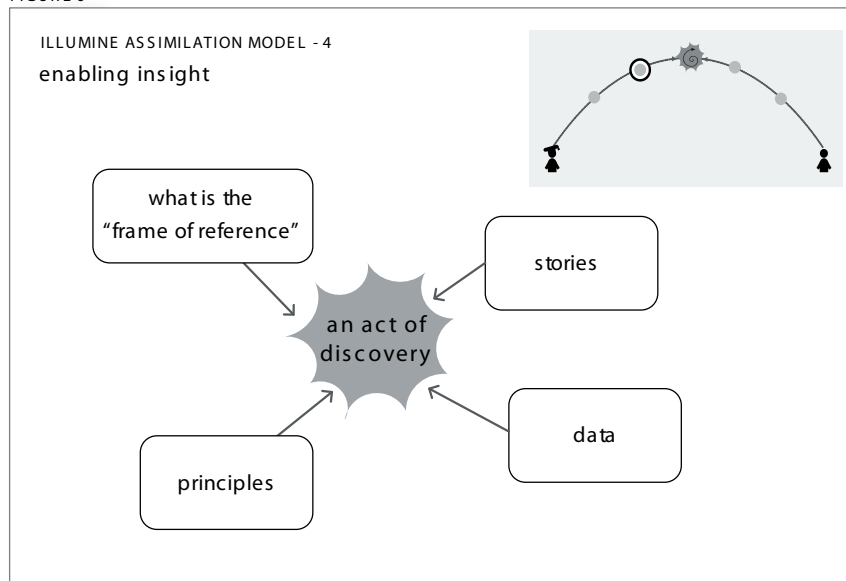
In the light of the above, an effective teacher enables students to identify and adopt appropriate identities that encourage assimilation of knowledge.

iii) Enabling Insight • The third step in the assimilation model is enabling insight. Insight takes place when the student develops an 'inner recognition' of the ideas being presented by the teacher. This inner recognition is an act of discovery by the

student. The role of the teacher at this stage—after providing mental access and invoking aspiration—is to provide triggers for this act of discovery (see Figure 6, next page). Students achieve this inner recognition through a variety of mental capacities. They include the following: a) reasoning, the use of data; b) perception, the use of frames of reference; c) narratives, the use of stories; and d) principles, the use of scenarios. The teacher encourages the development and utilization of these mental capacities in the student, enabling thereby the discovery and recognition of inner knowledge and insight in a more predictable and systematic manner.

iv) Creating Response Capability • The fourth step in the assimilation model is to create 'response capability'. Once inner knowing is generated in the student, the teacher directs this knowledge so that it manifests as dynamic human capacity. This manifestation of dynamic human capacity takes place when the student faces appropriate—not too hard, not too trivial—challenges, both within the knowledge domain and in the real world. How is a challenge different from problems set in every examination? The difference lies in the outcomes

FIGURE 6



sought. A teacher who sets ‘problems’ wants ‘answers’ or ‘set solutions’ to the problem. A teacher who provides ‘challenges’ wants the student to respond ‘creatively’, without the student being necessarily right or wrong (see Figure 7). This creative response comes only when the student goes beyond the boundaries of memory—reaction—and enters the realm of possibilities and potentialities. At this stage, knowledge is being assimilated into transformed human potential.

The Final Stage: Conscious Practice

By this stage, the teacher has steadily enabled the student in the journey of assimilation. First, the student gained mental access and thereby made the subject mentally proximate. Second, the student’s aspiration was invoked as a consequence of alignment between the subject-matter and his or her own self-esteem. Third, the stu-

dent was enabled to discover insights and thereby develop inner knowing. Fourth, the student was encouraged to leap beyond memory and previous knowledge and enter the space of evolution in and through knowledge.

Now the teacher and the student are together, in cognitive terms. The next goal for them both is to continue growing and evolving in all aspects of knowledge related to the subject at hand. This continued assimilation and consequent evolution will take place when both under-


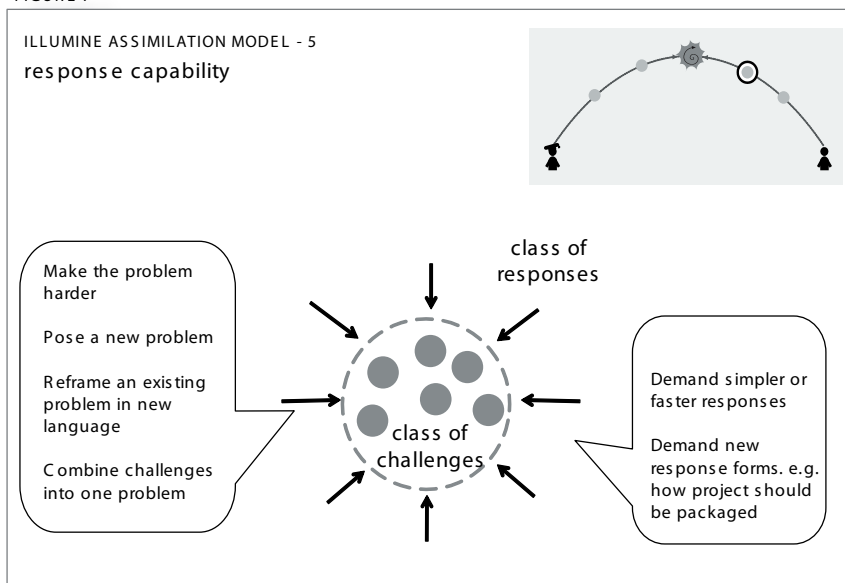
take a conscious practice of the subject, a practice which is combined with awareness of potential improvement and growth. This last stage is usually the realm of truly committed teachers and truly committed students. For the rest, to achieve success in even one or more of the steps of the assimilation journey will mean a great advancement over the current reality in India’s educational system. 

FIGURE 7



Forerunners of Malayalam Literature

Swami Narasimhananda

PROFESSOR MURALIDHARAN RUSHED to the lecture hall. He dreaded this subject: the history of Malayalam literature. It was like reducing the poetry of literature to a dull drone. He had made up his mind. It was better to let the students do all the talking and he would moderate the discussion. By the time he reached the hall, it was full, thanks to his reputation of being a captivating teacher. ‘Good morning,’ he began; ‘I am afraid today’s lecture will not be very interesting. The topic is the history of Malayalam literature. To calm your nerves, I have a plan. You do the discussion and I will stand apart and help you, if need be. Will that be okay?’ ‘Yes,’ cheered the class. This was going to be interesting. The undergraduate literature students had been victims of hour-long listening, and now was the chance to chatter.

‘But Sir,’ Manju interrupted, ‘where do we begin?’ ‘Begin at the beginning. Talk about the origin of Malayalam.’ Muralidharan was feeling greatly relieved. He had now only to watch the drama.

‘Malayalam is one of the modern Indian languages,’ the topper Usha was the first to speak, as usual. ‘It started evolving as a separate language in the early part of the thirteenth century, when it developed an independent script. This script

called Vattezhuthu, round letter, was a descendant of Brahmi. Since the area where this language is spoken—present day Kerala—was under Tamil rule, it was highly influenced by the Tamil language. The early poetry was mainly in the form of folk songs.’

‘I know, these songs are called *nadan pattukkal*, country songs, *vadakkan pattukal*, northern songs, or *tekkan pattukal*, southern songs,’ added Rajan, the singer in the class. ‘I like the *thoni pattu*, boat song.’ He started singing:

O young girl of the Kuttanadan fields,
sweet like the cuckoo,
get ready drums, get ready trumpets,
get ready women to greet us.
Get people to welcome us,
decorate the place with festoons.
We come cherishing victory!

Rajan was drawn into the mood of the song and began drumming his fingers on the desk. ‘Those were mainly romantic songs,’ said Indu, ‘and were followed by works in the Manipravala style, praising feminine beauty. These are called *champu kavya*, a mixture of prose and poetry, the famous works being *Unniyachi Charitam* (Life of Unniyachi),

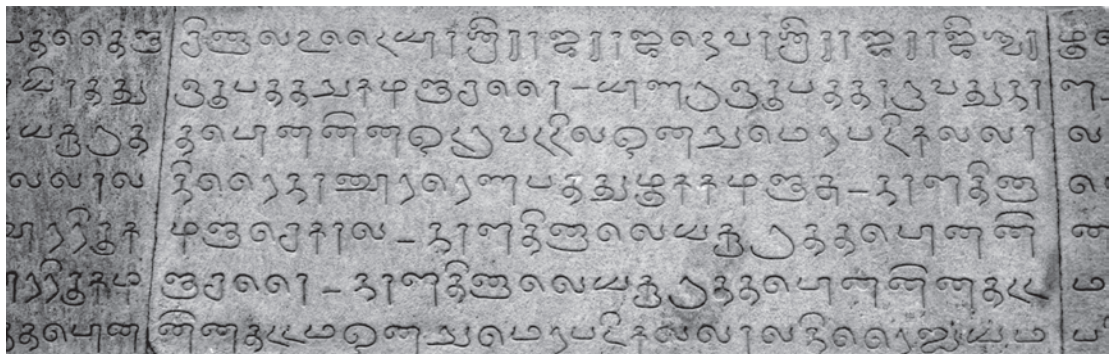


IMAGE: SRINIVASAN RAJAGOPALAN

Koka Sandesham (Message of the Goose), *Ramayana Champu*, and *Bharata Champu*.'

'What a strange name, Manipravala!' Rajan exclaimed. 'Manipravala is a mixture of Malayalam and Sanskrit,' remarked Usha. '*Mani* means gem and *pravala* stands for coral; so *manipravala* denotes the harmonious combination of gem and coral to fashion a beautiful garland. The literary finesse of both Malayalam and Sanskrit were exploited in this style. The language used in *Ramacharitam*, by Chiraman of the twelfth century, was also stylistically similar. This work was elaborated upon by Madhava Panicker, Shankara Panicker, and Rama Panicker of the Niranam family.'

'But Indu, do you know when the present form of Malayalam first appeared?' Manju was getting interested. 'With the *Krishna Gatha* (Story of Krishna), written by Cheruseri, Malayalam took a definite turn towards the present form. This was the first work that attempted to free Malayalam from the pervasive Sanskrit influence and led to its development as an independent language. In this work Cheruseri incorporated all the Sanskrit figures of speech—*upama*, simile, *rupaka*, metaphor, and the like—into Malayalam. His description of Krishna learning to walk is wonderful:

'He began standing up, bending his knees;
many days passed thus in trying,
walking a little, overcoming difficulties,
falling down, and then crying.

'Further, he describes the spring season thus:

'O red flower, you have become
the red mark on the forehead
of blooming trees.
Like the lotus (blooming) in winter
(Krishna) has come near us.

'He was extraordinary in his use of simile. Many of the proverbs extant now have their origin in his works.'

'Whatever you may say,' said Manju, 'it was Tunchat Ezhuttachchhan who gave a new shape to Malayalam. He adopted a new script of fifty-one letters in place of the Vattezhuthu of thirty letters. This gave birth to modern Malayalam and that is why he is called the father of modern Malayalam. He created a new style called Kilipattu, in which a parrot narrates the story. Born in the sixteenth century at Tirur in the Malappuram district of Kerala in a house called Tunjan Parambu, Ezhuttachchhan wrote *Adhyatma Ramayanam Kilipattu* (Parrot-song of the Adhyatma Ramayana), which is sung

even today in virtually all Hindu households of Kerala, particularly in the Malayalam month of Karkidakam, which falls in July-August. Apart from *Adhyatma Ramayanam Kilipattu*, he wrote *Mahabharatam Kilipattu* (Parrot-song of the Mahabharata), *Bhagavatam Kilipattu* (Parrot-song of the Bhagavata), *Harinama Sankirtanam* (Song to the Glory of Hari), and *Irupattinalu Vrittam* (Twenty-four Metres). He summarized the teachings of the epics in a simple language accessible to the masses. With him, the use of Malayalam without much of Sanskrit vocabulary became prevalent. His work on the Ramayana can be

Tunchat Ezhuttachchhan's house at Tirur



equated with that of Tulsidas's, though *Ramcharit-manas* is sung by the people of a much bigger geographical area.'

'I particularly like Ezhuttachchhan's teaching ethical principles through his poetry,' said Rajan. 'His lines on anger in *Adhyatma Ramayanam* are remarkable:

'People perish by anger
Anger begets hatred
Anger binds men to the world
Anger distracts from duties.
Mortals should give up anger
Surely, anger has become death
and, desire the river of doom.
The garden of Krishna alone
is the source of happiness.

'At a time when Kerala society was being influenced by Western culture, consequent on Western states making inroads into India, Ezhuttachchhan's works helped people to remain focused on native values. His *Mahabharatam Kilipattu* contains profound thoughts. He could deftly use everyday words and give them deep meaning. He vividly portrayed different scenes with relevant messages, like the following conversation between Sarama and her son, the dog Sarameya, who had been beaten by officiants at Janamejaya's yajna for no fault of his:

'Why cry baby? Who beat you thus?
What punishment this?
Tell, what wrong you did to them?
Asked thus, he said,
No punishment this, I have not erred,
Not smelled the offering,
neither touched nor seen.
Mother, there ought to be no punishment
for this if one thinks it over.'

'Was Ezhuttachchhan's *Adhyatma Ramayanam* a translation of the Sanskrit work?' asked Indu. 'No,' Usha was in a hurry to display her knowledge, 'the original Sanskrit work has 4,218 verses of two lines each, while Ezhuttachchhan's work has 19,718 lines or 9,859 verses, more than twice the volume of the Sanskrit version. Ezhuttachchhan followed the broad tenor of the Sanskrit work, but retold the

entire story in his own style, adding metaphors and similes. He let the poetry flow slowly, not making it cryptic, and harmoniously included teachings on ethical principles. A good example of this is the scene where sage Vishwamitra imparts the knowledge of Bala and Atibala to Rama, knowing which one could be free from hunger and exhaustion. The Sanskrit *Adhyatma Ramayana* describes this incident in verses 4.24-5 of the 'Bala Kanda':

*'Kinchid-desham-atikramya
ramam-abhya bhaktitah;
Dadau balam chatibalam
vidye dve deva-nirmite.
Yayor-grahana-matrena
kshut-kshamadi na jayate.*

'After journeying a little, he lovingly called Rama and instructed him in the two sciences, Bala and Atibala, which were founded by the gods and knowing which one is free from hunger and exhaustion.

'The same verse has been thus retold by Ezhuttachchhan:

'Walking slowly, traversing some distance
Smiling softly, the sage spoke thus:
Hear, Rama, Raghava, Rama, Lakshmana
Indeed, you are gentle, soft kids
But, O lions, your true bodies are that
Untouched by hunger and thirst
Learn these two great Vidyas
O kids, and practise them.

'The poet not only retold the story of the Sanskrit *Adhyatma Ramayana*, he also made it more musical.'

'Things are not that simple,' said Indu. 'There is a lot of criticism of Ezhuttachchhan's poetry. For instance, he is considered verbose. He adopted the style and sometimes the very ideas of Valmiki, Kalidasa, Magha, Rajashekhara, and others. He profusely used adages and proverbs from standard Sanskrit literature, and his works like *Adhyatma Ramayanam Kilipattu* and *Mahabharatam Kilipattu* have many repetitions. A critical analysis of his writings reveals that he lacked the kind of vision or



Punthanam's house at Kizhatthur

literary acumen that a Valmiki or Vyasa had.' 'All the same,' Manju interjected, 'it was Ezhuttachchan who touched the hearts of common people with his enchanting storytelling, and he continues to do so. Literary criticism apart, Ezhuttachchan's works are a devotee's perspective on the great epics. They are independent works born of devotion following the tradition of great masters like Valmiki and Vyasa.'

'I remember,' said Rajan, 'sitting next to my granny when she used to sing the *Ramayanam Kili-pattu* in the month of Karkidakam. I used to love the song's special tune. The reward of listening was *unniyappam* [a delicacy from Kerala]. I can still hear the lines:

'Mark, all vices furiously attack
those attached to the body.
"I am the body"—this idea
brings ignorance, delusion to humans.
Listen, to the knowledge of the Self
the slayer of delusion. Indeed
bondage is created by ignorance,
bondage is destroyed by knowledge.

'It is said that Ezhuttachchan married a girl from a family in Ammakavu, near Kutanad in the Palghat district of Kerala. After the birth of a daughter and subsequent death of his wife, he took sannyasa and visited many places in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka,

Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. Finally, he settled down at Chittur in Kerala and established an ashrama there. He had many disciples who turned out to be great scholars and writers.'

'Our society does not spare anyone,' lamented Indu, 'not even Ezhuttachchan. Some time back his admirers wanted to erect a statue at his birthplace, but were prevented by religious fundamentalists. This is the fate of one whose words inspire everyone. Even today, thousands take their children to his house for *vidyarambha*, initiation into learning, on Vijayadashami day. Kerala is definitely in an eternal debt to Ezhuttachchan. His

works are the backbone of Malayalam language and have been holding it upright for hundreds of years.'

'Punthanam was another poet who wrote in the language of the people,' said Rajan. 'His real name is not known. Punthanam is the name of his house. He was born at Kizhatthur in the Malappuram district of Kerala. He was a contemporary of Ezhuttachchan and Melpattur Narayana Bhattathiri, the Sanskrit scholar and author of *Narayaniyam*. Punthanam was a devout brahmana who used to regularly worship Guruvayurappan. Though married, he did not have any children for a long time. All rituals and observances having been fruitless, he wrote the story of Santanagopala, as found in the Bhagavata, in the Pana style. This was the first work produced in this style and was called *Kumaraharanam* (Stealing of Children). Soon, Punthanam was blessed with a son. After one year the son's rice-feeding ceremony was to take place. Many people were invited. Punthanam's wife bathed and dressed the child and put him to sleep on a mat. The guests put away their old clothes in the room that the child was lying in, had their bath, and donned new garments. But, when the time for the ceremony was at hand, the child was found to have died out of suffocation from the clothes that had been accidentally piled on it. Punthanam was benumbed with grief. Being an ardent devotee, he

had nowhere to go but to his beloved Guruvayurappan. With his dead son in his arms, he spontaneously sang the song 'Jnanapana' (Song of Wisdom), also composed in the Pana style.

'The song, ringing with words of profound wisdom, began thus:

'Krishna, Krishna, Mukunda, Janardana
Krishna, Govinda, Narayana, Harey
Achyutananda, Govinda, Madhava
Satchidananda, Narayana, Harey.

'Let my Master be with me ever
Let divine names be on my tongue
And let me not be away from them
So that my human birth may be fulfilled.

'I knew not what would occur till yesterday
Know not what will happen tomorrow
Destruction of this body—
Know not when it will be.

'The depth of thought contained in these lines is unparalleled. This song summarizes the beginning and evolution of a spiritual life. The transitory nature of this world is emphasized:

'In a few days you make one ascend the throne.
You lay rags on the king living in a palace.

'He sang of the futility of the desire for a child:

'When little Krishna is playing in my mind,
Do I need babies as my children?'

'There are many anecdotes about Punthanam,' said Indu. 'It is believed that Punthanam did not have Vedic education. After the death of his son, he would live in the precincts of the Guruvayur temple. When Punthanam wrote *Kumaraharanam*, he requested Melpattur Narayana Bhattathiri to go through it and correct mistakes, if any. Being a Sanskrit scholar, Melpattur Bhattathiri did not think well of Punthanam, who wrote only in the popular Malayalam language. Bhattathiri told Punthanam, "What is there to read in Malayalam? It will surely be full of errors. Moreover, you do not have the knowledge of *vibhakti* [declension]!" As Bhattathiri said this in the temple in front of many people,

Punthanam felt dejected and burst out crying. At the same time, the deity Guruvayurappan spoke out from inside the temple, "Punthanam may not know *vibhakti* like Bhattathiri, but he has more bhakti than Bhattathiri." Hearing this, Bhattathiri apologized, went through the text of *Kumaraharanam*, and carried out appropriate corrections.

'Punthanam spent the rest of his life reading the Bhagavata in simple Malayalam in the Guruvayur temple. His reading was listened to by countless devotees as it was charged with devotional fervour. He wrote *Bhasha Karnamritam* (Language Nectar to the Ear) and *Ananda Karnamritam* (Nectar of Bliss to the Ear). Legend has it that he was taken to Vaikuntha, the abode of Bhagavan Vishnu, from his house by the messengers of Bhagavan.

'Well, this was more interesting than I expected,' said Muralidharan. 'We need to always remember that these stalwarts have given Malayalam its present shape. They have infused into the language power and clarity demonstrating as well how it can be effectively used as a medium to propagate traditional cultural and spiritual values. It is our duty to carry this tradition onward.'



'**Gynapana**' is indeed the gift the 'Eternal One' has bounteously bestowed upon his devotee for as long as the earth will be. There is nothing more that a poet devoted to his Lord could ask for, than to be seen and sung everywhere, every time, and have a place forever along with, and always close beside, the Eternal One Himself. ... Throughout 'Gynapana' Poonthanam is like the good teacher who can teach effortlessly and effectively, because he is so firm in his dharma, that all those who listen intently to him shall surely understand the philosophy underneath his poetry, even while one enjoys the child-like simplicity of his poetry. Poonthanam does all the thinking and analysis of the Vedas in clear and sparkling terms for us. All we have to do is just listen to him and he takes us almost instantly, so close to beauty, and hence naturally, to the gates of God.

—Gopi Krishnan Kottoor,
Poonthanam's Hymns—Gynapana, 7-9

A Bud Unfolds

Dr Alpana Ghose

SITTING IN MY BALCONY, I was enjoying the sunset. I had recently retired from active service as a chemistry teacher in a local college at Ranchi and had now the time to enjoy the bounties of nature. The sun was crimson red; the day was disappearing in the lap of dusk. The fading sun and the gentle evening breeze were enchanting. Suddenly the phone rang. A joyful voice was at the other end, 'Hello! Good evening ma'am. I am Priyanka [the name has been changed]. I have got a scholarship for higher studies at Ohio University. I will do my PhD there.' My heart was filled with joy. My eyes turned wet. As I replaced the receiver on its cradle, my mind was flooded with memories of a shattered girl who thought her life was doomed, that she was a good-for-nothing.

Shaken by Failure

I had noticed Priyanka for the first time in my practical chemistry class—a fair frail-looking young girl. She was carrying out experiments in acid-base titration, but her hands were shaking violently. I asked her, 'What is the matter with you? Are you sick?' She started crying, and within a minute or so her sobbing turned uncontrollable. I went over and held her and asked if I had been wrong in enquiring about her problem. I had not scolded her; had only wanted to know if she had any physical problem. But she was unable to answer me; only her sobbing increased. I took her to the teachers' room and allowed her to cry. After about fifteen minutes she controlled herself and looked at me. I asked her again about her problem, but she was not willing to disclose anything. She only said, 'No problem, ma'am, I'll be okay.' 'Why are you answering in the future tense—"will be"?' I asked. 'Why not now? Do you feel bad that I enquired about you? Have

you any serious illness which you don't want to discuss? Why should a young girl's hands shake so much?' Her only answer was 'no ma'am, I am okay'.

I looked at the door of the teachers' room and saw her friends peeping in. I went to them and asked if any of them knew about her problem. The information I got left me stunned. She was a bright student from a well-to-do doctor's family. Her parents wanted her to be a doctor too. She appeared twice for the common admission test for medical colleges, but could not get through despite her best efforts. Her parents started blaming her, taking her failure as a personal insult in society. All this greatly upset Priyanka; she started fainting every now and then, and also developed other serious neurological problems. She obtained admission to my college as a chemistry honours student, but could not continue because of her illness. After a year-long treatment she was a little better and her hands shook only when she worked. But she remained physically weak. She had also become very sensitive, breaking down whenever she was asked anything related to her illness. At the end of the year she rejoined her course, having lost one session.

By the time I came back to her, she was a bit more composed. She wanted to go, but I did not allow her. We talked for some more time—nothing about her studies but about her beautiful dress, wet with tears, and about the shop from where she had bought that smart and sober dress; I told her that I wanted one for my daughter as well. She looked at her dress and happily gave me the name of the shop. Then we talked about our choice of colours, about dresses in vogue, and about many other things. Soon her mood changed completely. When she was leaving I asked her not to miss my class.

Next week I asked the girl next to her to help Pri-

yanka with the titration, even as I stood by her showing how to do the experiments properly. Her hands trembled, but not as violently as on the previous day. She was happy to record accurate readings. After the class she came to me and asked how she should answer the honours papers. She was used to multiple-choice questions, but in the honours examination she would have to write long answers. This gave me an opportunity to talk with her. We discussed several questions and answers. She was an intelligent student and learned very quickly. In the coming days we continued to talk about many things, but never about her sickness and the reason behind it.

After a month she was again absent for nearly a fortnight. Her friends told me that she was sick again. I got her address from her friends and decided to visit her home. But before I could do so, she was back at college. When I asked her about her absence, she said in a depressed voice, 'What will I gain by doing an honours course? My life is doomed. I will not study further.' 'Okay, what will you do then?' I asked. 'Nothing ma'am, I'm already dead. I can't stay at home, that's why I come to college.' 'You say you will not study,' I continued, 'then you will have to stay at home.' 'At home! No way!' she interjected, 'My mom ...' she broke off abruptly. I could understand the situation. I only asked her not to miss my class, at least. Luckily, she started attending classes again.

Can Do Anything

One morning Priyanka called me on my mobile phone to discuss a certain difficult chapter. I answered her question and asked if I could talk to her mother. When her mother came on the phone, I requested her to send Priyanka to my daughter's birthday celebrations next Wednesday. Her answer left me amazed. 'Priyanka can go anywhere she likes as she has nothing to do,' she said, 'she has decided not to appear in the medical admission test. Her career is just like that of any ordinary girl. I had other dreams for her. Anyhow, I will send her to your place.'

Priyanka came for my daughter's birthday celebrations with a beautiful gift. I introduced her to my

daughter and they started chatting. I was busy arranging the dinner table. Suddenly, Priyanka looked at Sri Sarada Devi's photograph on the wall and asked my daughter, 'Who is she? Is she your grandma?' 'No,' I interrupted, 'She is our Ma.' In the drawing room she found a big portrait of Swami Vivekananda. Immediately she said, 'I know this monk. He is Swami Vivekananda.' 'What do you know about him?' I asked. 'I know he went to Chicago and gave lectures about something that I don't know,' she quipped. 'Okay, we will talk about him some other day; let's start the birthday celebrations,' I summed up, as the table was now ready. We enjoyed the evening greatly. My daughter also liked Priyanka's company and both promised to continue their new friendship.

Days passed by. Once, after I had answered the queries she had again come with, Priyanka asked me a startling question: 'Ma'am, do we have immense potential within? Is it true that one can do anything that one wants to do; we have only to manifest the power within ourselves?' 'Where did you get these words from?' I asked with surprise. 'I bought a book by Swami Vivekananda; these words were written in that book,' and she went on to quote Swamiji's famous statement: 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within.' 'Yes, each word of this quote is a hundred per cent true,' I assured her. 'Can you give me an example ma'am?' 'Yes. You have studied Newton's laws of motion and the Archimedes' principle? Archimedes and Newton didn't have books as you have them today stating these laws. It is very easy for you now to go through the precise formulation of these laws. But think of those scientists who were working in times when these scientific laws had not yet been stated. They experimented and thought deeply over the results and suddenly got the answers from within. That is why Archimedes shouted 'eureka' when he found the reason why a ship floats on water while a needle sinks. The answer came from within him; and when the correct answer comes from within, the person is filled with immense joy. Priyanka became thoughtful for a while, then her eyes became bright and her face was aglow. I saw determination

in that face. She promised me that she will try her best to get a good rank in the honours course.

Now Priyanka started attending classes regularly. Days turned to years; she obtained good results in all the three years of her graduate course; she looked confident and balanced. When her final results were declared, she stood second. She came to the department with her friends to meet her teachers. The whole group was cheerful, their eyes shone with new dreams. I asked Priyanka, 'What next?' She said that she had applied for postgraduate courses in the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and Delhi University. She had prepared well for the examinations and was ready to go wherever she got a chance to pursue postgraduate studies. I liked her regaining the confidence she had lost a few years back.

One morning Priyanka gave me the news that she had been selected for the MSc Chemistry course at IIT Kanpur. I was very happy and blessed her from the core of my heart. After she joined the course we often exchanged e-mails discussing her studies, hostel life, friends, and such other things.

I Must Become Great

It was nearly two years since she had left Ranchi. She never came to visit her parents during holidays. I rebuked her for this and requested her to come home and see her parents whenever she had time. But Priyanka would answer firmly, 'I have to become a great woman like Madam Curie, or someone like her.' I appreciated her determination.

And finally, that evening when I was contemplating the sunset in my balcony, came the phone call announcing her receipt of scholarship for doctoral studies in the US. My heart was filled with great joy. A young girl had been saved from being nipped in the bud. A word from Swami Vivekananda had changed her life. I sent her an e-mail saying:

Slowly and silently
 Petals are unfolding
 The bud is blooming,
 Wings of fragrance are spreading,
 Priyanka is growing.
 Like a lotus on water, you are floating,

Blessings like dew are collecting,
 A pearl is in the making.

Be a pearl—gentle, sober, shining.
 Diamonds are sparkling, but cut very hard.

I have a request to all parents. Please do not nip young buds when they are trying to bloom. It is encouragement and emotional support that help children grow.



(Continued from page 511)

At college level short accounts of the important religious philosophies, both Eastern and Western, may be taught to give an intellectual background for practical spiritual values. Other topics about which some basic information, both theoretical and practical, can be given include the following: simple rituals of worship; japa of divine names and mantras; kirtan, singing of devotional hymns; and pilgrimage to holy places. At least once during the academic year a short course of spiritual discipline—spiritual retreat—spread over four to five days may be arranged, especially for interested students. Organizing this as a fully residential camp at a congenial place would be ideal.

Before giving students spiritual education the teachers themselves need to be trained. This can be done in two ways: by starting special institutions for training teachers, and by arranging short-term courses spanning two to three weeks during holidays. Technology has grown by leaps and bounds over the last fifty years and can be fruitfully utilized in devising suitable gadgets and teaching aids. But for this the willing acceptance of the need for spiritual education and the will to implement it vigorously is necessary. There are a number of institutions with competent persons already working in this field. Their help can be sought, and we are sure they will be happy to participate in such programmes and share their knowledge and expertise.



References

1. *Yoga Sutra*, 2.2, 29.
2. *Manu Smriti*, 1.86.

Renewal of a Trans-Himalayan Dialogue

Dr Kalyan Kumar Chakravarty

(Continued from the previous issue)

Salty Tso Kar, Ladakh

TIBETAN SCHOOLS TRACE their lineage to Indian tantric masters: Drupchen or Mahasiddhas. Monks like Zanabazar sculpt Mongolian monasteries as late as the late seventeen and early eighteen centuries. Tibetan teachers like Rinchen Sangpo employ Kashmiri artists at Alchi and Tabo monasteries in Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh. Such pre-eminent personages stand out as bearers of the trans-Himalayan dialogue. Kumarajiva heads the translation bureau in China in the fourth century CE. Bodhidharma founds Shaolin boxing at the Loyang monastery in China. The *Guhyasamaja Tantra*, *Arya Manjushri Mula Kalpa*, *Sadhnamala*, *Rasamanjari*, *Chaurapanchashika*, *Karandavyuha Sutra*, *Ashtasahasrika Prajnaparamita Sutra*, *Suvarnaprabhasottama Sutra*, and many Vajrayana texts and Vaipulya sutras are translated and retranslated into mystical *dharanis*, songs, *mudras*, hand gestures, cave paintings, cloth scrolls, wood-block paintings, masked Chamb dances, yantras, and mandala designs. The stories of *Panchatantra*—*Kalila wa Dimna* in its Arabic version—*Vetalpanchavimshati*, *Kathasaritsagara*, and *Lalitavistara* are translated into sculpture or murals in the Himalayas and in Central and South East Asia. Vedic, Zoroastrian, Nestorian, Manichaean, Buddhist, and Islamic texts have entered a cauldron for shaping the mindscape.

Burmese Anyathian Palaeolithic and cord-impressed Neolithic pottery, megalithic and ferro-

electric remains, including burial stones and earthen jars, structural remains associated with a rice culture, defensive fortifications—with moats, spikes, traps, and prickly edges, connected with jungle warfare—provide areas of shared archaeological research between north-east India and South East Asia. A cross-linguistic survey of devoiced sonorants is required alongside a study of historical chronicles, lexicons, riddles, and hymns to chart the cross-pollination between scripted and unscripted traditions in the area. The Greco-Bactrian, Saka, Yueh-chih, Kushana, and Sassanid settlements in Central Asia, the inscribed petroglyph and geoglyph boulders and rock escarpments, the lavish wall paintings, Buddhist stupas and *tamga* inscriptions, the nomadic tents and textiles, elements like double-shell vaults, cylindrical drums, domes, *muqarnas* or decorative corbels, hypostyle halls, stepwise patterns, glazed tile work, astronomical observatory architecture, *hammams* or sauna baths, *kosminars* or milestone pillars, and *baolis* or stepwells provide numerous platforms for trans-Himalayan collaboration between South and Central Asia for adaptive use and rebirth of the past through palingenesis.

Shiva is transformed into Avalokiteshwara, who in turn becomes the Chinese Kuan Yin, the goddess of compassion, in Central Asia. Shiva is incarnated as Bhattara Guru in South East Asia; Brahma changes into Manjushri; Matrikas, Dakinis, and

Yoginis change into analogous forms. The Tibetan Samye monastery is modelled in 775 CE after the Odantapuri monastery, with the top storey in Indian, the middle in Chinese, and the lowest in Khotan style. In the *Taittiriya Samhita* the gods anoint Indra in the northern quarters, Uttarakuru, and the kings are anointed in imitation of these acts of the gods. The concepts of Himalayas, Sumeru, Mahameru, the *axis mundi*; the pericarp of a lotus floating in the ocean, buttressed by four mountains; four pillars connecting heaven and earth, the great Manasarovar, the cosmic forests, Lake Anavatapta at the foot of Kailas, and the Kraunchadwara, the foramen magnum in the body and the house of God³ provide the foundational elements for the design of temples and sacred complexes in South and South East Asia. In the early nineteenth century Burmese kings plan the city of Srikshetra on the model of Indra's city Sudarshana on Mount Meru.

Merchant princes and peasant traders from Changthang in Tibet, the Shamma from Sham Ilaqa down the Indus, and the Kiraiyakash transporters of Leh and Kargil still retain the memory of the trade between Dhaka, Kashmir, Punjab, Ladakh, and Tibet, and the trans-Karakoram trade linking Yarkand with Kashmir—in pashm, Bengal muslin, Indian spices, Lhasa ponies, Baltistan apricots, Changthang wool, and sheep. The Kache in Tibet are Muslims from Kashmir who have intermarried with Tibetans and Chinese, speak Tibetan,

and retain Persian or Urdu for religious purposes. Exchange of tribute and presents between Tibet and China was part of a regulated trade. Chummul head farmers received traders in the villages of the valley of Dras, shared by the Raja of Ladakh and the Malik of Kashmir. Animal skins, medicinal herbs, and salt were exchanged for barley, flour, tea, colours, cotton *thangkas* or scrolls with mandalas, wooden items, ores, alloys, books, and statues.⁴

The Search for Harmony in Language and Culture

Despite diversity, this varied universe of the Himalayas is traversed and bound by an intangible heritage of itinerant, mnemonic, subaltern orality of pilgrims, travellers, artists, and balladeers, and by a language of life, administration, cognition, and philosophy amenable to glotto-chronological study. Sacred cultural resources like the Bhutanese script Lhoyig or Drukuyig, the Tibetan script Uchen, and grammatical forms like the *Sum Ta* and *Rigney Chu*, ten sciences, are common to Mahayana in Himalayan countries. Common problems of conservation of indivisible trans-border natural resources—like vegetation, waters, and soil—megalithic and pit burials, and seasonal trans-human movements provide the pan-Himalayan theme of collaboration. In the centuries before and after the beginning of the Common Era the Mongoloid, Caucasoid, and Proto-Australoid racial strains,



Kanishka II's quarter gold dinars (c.227–47 CE); left: crowned king, holding a trident and sacrificing at altar (second trident above altar to the left), with a Bactrian legend around and additional Brahmi letters; right: two-armed, three-headed Shiva, holding trident and diadem, Bull Nandi left behind, with Bactrian legend to the right

and the Uralic, Altaic, Turkic, Sino-Indian, Austro-Asiatic, and Indo-European dialects mingled in the trade posts, caravanserais, citadels, depots, and monasteries across the Himalayan bridge and divide. In the later medieval period, in much of Central and South Asia under Islamic rule, Persian travelled as the language of letters, Arabic of law and scholarship, and Sunni became the dominant cult. The Indo-Mongoloid Kirata speaking Kuki-Chin languages, with a script aligned with Brahmi, has cultural affinities with the linguistic nuances of Tai, Ahom, Javanese, and Balinese.

The Singpho in north-east India and Burma, the Kachin in Burma, the Jingpo in China, the Tani in Arunachal Pradesh, the seven tribes of Nagaland that share territory with Burma, the matrilineal Khasi of Meghalaya and Mosou of Yunnan in south-west China, demonstrate emphatic affinities. In Manipur the Umanglai forest deities, Sanamahi and Pakhangba—sun and moon god—the Paphal python curves representing royal insignia, the Thengou dance notionally executed on the thousand petals of a lotus—Ananta-naga or Sahasrara—and the Lai Haraoba merrymaking festival of gods, in celebration of the creation of the earth or the human body, illustrate the Himalayan theme of communion of all organic and inorganic elements. The Doini Polo cult in Arunachal Pradesh and the Seng Khasi cult in Meghalaya revive the elements of nature worship. The Hundred Drums Wangla festival of the Garos in Meghalaya is consecrated to the sun. The Cheraw bamboo dance in Mizoram and the Nagri Pura worship in Tripura offer devotion to bamboo. The Naga textile designs identify diverse tribal groups. The Kaman Mishmis tell about the girl Hambrumai who learns to weave patterns from water ripples, and designs from bamboo leaves,



Artists performing the Bihu Dance of Assam

ferns, and flowers. The Sonam Lossong festival of Sikkim seeks nature's bounty. The Doini Polo cult of Arunachal Pradesh is one of worship of moon god and sun goddess. The Bihu, Oja Pali, Bhaona traditions of Assamese song and dance invoke the bounteous harvest of nature. There is a confluence of Islamic and Hindu cults at Hajo and in the Jari and Zikir musical traditions of Assam. All these folkways and cultural practices speak of the constant concern in the north-east Himalayas with a harmonious relationship between human and non-human communities of earth and heaven. The convergence of persuasions in Devaraja, Shiva-Buddha cults, the theme of Anavatapta Lake, coiled nagas holding up temples, the mutations of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the Sanskritized place names, and the rituals and rites in South East Asia indicate an uncharted continent of shared ideas with north-east Himalayas. The cyclic gong tones and chimes of musical instruments, the tilts, turns, and flexions of dances in constricted spaces, the stylized, syncopated gestures and postures of Wayang puppetry and of war games and dances provide further bonds between north-east India and South East Asia.

The Future: From Homogenization to Integration

The inspiration for the Advaitic quest of Swami

Vivekananda and his compeers wells from these Himalayan traditions for companionate and co-operative living. These must not be abjured for power-centric philosophies of control and domination. At this point of time all sacred and ecological groups are being reduced to economic and production categories, with the intrusion of capital into bio-cultural and mental landscapes. Exchange value is being placed above use value, signifiers are being split from the signified, and languages and signs are being distanced from their referents. There is a growing dissociation of arts from life, culture from nature, stage from the habitat, rituals and ceremonies from their philosophical moorings. A 'society of spectacle' driven by a manipulative 'consciousness industry' is taking over from the fellowship of human beings and their neighbours. 'Life is lost in living,' wisdom in knowledge, and knowledge in information. Contextual, oral, intangible memories and ideas, held by communities in collective custody, are being textualized, herded, corralled, and cannibalized into a procession of simulacra, evil imitations of the original, doppelgängers, disruptive of community values of guardianship and invitation and obligation to ancestors, posterity, and spirits. Polycephalic cities, multi-tier cropping, multi-storey forestry, many-hued cultures are giving way, and the variety and complexity of the world is being superseded by a radical simplification.

A symptom of this malaise is visible in the manner in which the Himalayan communities are being marginalized vis-à-vis lowland communities, because of fragility of terrain, restricted mobility, and attenuated infrastructure, capital, and entrepreneurship. The Himalayan people are victims of an uncompensated drain of natural resources like timber, silt, water, nutrients, and biodiversity—all going in a one-way flow from the high to the low lands (ibid.). Trade conducted through glaciated passes amidst inclement winters has been interrupted by the 1962 Indo-Chinese war. Jacquard looms have flooded Europe with imitation Kashmiri shawls. Tush shawls have become unobtainable with the Tibetan antelope, *pantholops hodgson* becoming rare (ibid.). It is time

that the investments in mega power, irrigation, tourism, and mining projects are reoriented to plough the gains back to the Himalayan people. This is one way to restore the viability of the Himalayan communities for acting as cognitive principals rather than as native informants in their interrupted dialogue with the world. The cultural and spiritual re-empowerment, initiated at Mayavati, will be strengthened by the reversal of economic and cognitive colonialism, unleashed over the past century by an engulfing tide of bio-cultural reductionism and homogenization.

Cooperation in Research and Conservation

The trans-border collaboration across and beyond the Himalayas is vital to recover the common continent of ideas underlying multiple histories and persuasions. It is necessary to combine cognitive and scientific resources and instruments to examine the fossil records. The ancient trade routes run by Jads, Bods, Bhotes, Gaddis, Gujjars should be restored for facilitating the cultural efflorescence and material well-being of the region. Common strategies need to be evolved to nurture the sacred commons of meadows, pastures, and springs, sanctified by a pantheon of deities. In a high-energy environment characterized by immature geology, heavy rainfall, fast-moving streams and high seismicity, it is absolutely urgent to conduct joint proto-geological and field-traverse studies to anticipate and mitigate natural calamities. Cooperation is vital to stop heavy construction, blasting, and opencast or strip mining, and to regulate population and urban explosion in tectonically and lithologically fragile areas. The Himalayan nations have to collaborate to arrest and mitigate slope instability, check conversion of mixed climax forests into early successional plantations, resettle *jhumias*—slash and burn cultivators—decentralize energy grids, augment dry season flows through cross-basin riparian agreements, and share hydro-metrological observation for conserving ground aquifers and reducing evaporation loss. Conservation of local knowledge will be an invaluable part of this consortium approach for deal-

ing with the low human development index in the region. Such an approach is also vital for shoring up the defences of shared bio-cultural and linguistic diversity against commoditization, for developing a digital database as a surrogate for dispersed intellectual resources, and for defensive disclosure of the prior art database of common knowledge systems against misappropriation by an intrusive individualistic global intellectual-property-rights regime.

Cure for Civilizational Crisis

Swami Vivekananda's Himalayan and global mission to reconcile, to unite, and to heal should be read as a timely solution for the current crisis of civilization. Mahatma Gandhi describes this crisis in terms of a seven-fold deadly malaise—wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, science without humanity, politics without principle, commerce without morality, and worship without sacrifice. Prof. Mahbub ul Haq, harbinger of the UN Human Development Reports, explains the crisis in terms of unsustainable patterns of development, ruthless sharpening of income disparities, joblessness minus new employment opportunities, voicelessness without political freedom, rootlessness with erosion of cultural and socioeconomic identity, and powerlessness with squandering of resources required by future generations. The civilizational crisis has arisen from an exploitative, reductive, exclusivist relation with nature established with the Europeanization and technification of the planet. Swamiji had dared to set his face against the redemptive mission of the technological civilization, which had assumed the *telos* to objectify, subordinate, appropriate, utilize, and discard a civilization that was based on a non-extractive covenant with nature, on a sustainable material economy, on harmony and coexistence of lifestyles, on intrinsic, ultimate, and transcendental values rather than instrumental, proximate, and existential values.

The Mayavati prospectus shows a way out of the dualistic contamination which has led to xenophobia, hatred, enslavement, immiseration, and impoverishment in the world. Swamiji explains that the

particularistic Greek roots of the self-delusion of European universalism, which claims to fulfil its entelechy to sublate and supersede non-European cultures, including the Indian, are normative deviations in the itinerary of the spirit. Swamiji's Vedantic thought is reflected in the Mayavati prospectus, and his works provide a universal religion of unity, love, and freedom. It is a system that perceives, by understanding and realization rather than by argument and ratiocination, the one behind the manifold evolution—the one which, in itself, is not a product of evolution. He explains how the making of distinctions presupposes a unity and how all religions, arts, and sciences demand a subsequent restoration of lost unity. He suggests that sharing of horizons and mutual fecundation of traditions towards this end is an alternative to the attempt to inseminate, procreate, and harvest non-European traditions on European ideological foundations.

The Mayavati prospectus is a clarion call for the renewal of the mighty and uncanny beginnings of the trans-Himalayan mission for global unity, freedom, and well-being. It is an invitation to embrace a world of diverse differences in an inclusive system of internally differentiated and yet systematically integrated cultures. It is a call to the human being to be species-conscious rather than tribe-conscious, to inhabit a society with multiple cores and peripheries and an integral consciousness. Unity in variety, in Swamiji's formulation, is the plan of the universe. To kill difference in opinions is to kill thought.⁵ In this age of non-linear mathematics, high-energy physics, and isomorphism of verbal and genetic codes, the Advaita principle enshrined in the Mayavati prospectus has gained unforeseen relevance for the restitution of the fast vanishing continent of ideas marking the inter-connectedness of all beings.



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Swami Brahmananda

Swami Prabhavananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

WHEN MAHARAJ CAME to Madras the first time, Swami Ramakrishnananda was the abbot. In South India they are crazy about lectures, just as in this country [USA]. So some people came to inquire when Maharaj was going to give a speech. Swami Ramakrishnananda said, 'Look here, he speaks to us just one sentence, and we expound that sentence for years before you! What would you understand if he speaks?' You see, religion is something that is transmitted in silence.

He just put his hand over the head of each one of us and something happened to everybody. I can speak of my own experience, and that was as if my body was burning in great heat and a cool spray of water went over it, soothing it. These great souls could transform the lives and characters of people.

While Maharaj was living, if somebody went astray, the one punishment was, 'Come and stay with me.' I must say, that is not as easy as it sounds. The soil must be ready. For instance, in the life of Sri Ramakrishna we read how many visitors would come, but only a few of them would be interested to sit by him. The others would get restless and say, 'When are you going home? We will wait in the boat.' In the same way we have seen people want, and yet they couldn't see anything, couldn't feel anything. They were not ready.

In the scriptures we read, 'Not by study, not by learning, not by austerities, can you find God, but whom he chooses, by him is he known.' Now again, whom does he choose? He who longs for him. Is

he partial? No. In other words, you have to be a *mumukshu*, one who desires freedom. But I must confess that I was not a *mumukshu*. All I knew was that I had read the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* when I was a boy of fourteen or fifteen, and the names Naren and Rakhal attracted me. I don't know why. Naren was gone, but Rakhal was living—that is what attracted me. And he gave me, he gave his disciples, that desire, that longing. He said to me, 'What is to be done for you, I have done already; but if you want to enjoy bliss while living, you have to struggle, you have to work hard.' But in my experience I have seen that through his grace, without much struggle, he gives, he fulfils me.

While I was at Puri, Maharaj gave me the charge to take care of two young women who were his disciples—to take them to bathe in the ocean, to take them to the temple, in other words to show them the place of pilgrimage. One day they wanted to visit the famous monastery established by Shankaracharya, but they did not dare approach Maharaj. They requested me to ask permission of him. His reply was, 'Shankara! Shankara will give you liberation! Go and meditate!' These women ran away! And he told me, 'Meditate, meditate, meditate. Then you will find that people suffer for no reason when there is the mine of bliss in everyone's heart. Then your heart will go out in sympathy and compassion for everybody.'

He emphasized what is known as the easy path to realize God: to keep recollectedness of God as often as possible. You see, we pass our time idly. We have time for everything else—we can sit and gossip for hours—but we have no time to meditate! That is the situation. But if you are a spiritual aspirant, the best method is to keep remembrance of

The text of this article has been collated by Ms Edith Tipple from eight lectures given by the author at the Vedanta centres of Hollywood and Santa Barbara between 1961 and 1975.

God as often as you can; and remembrance means to feel the presence of God. Of course, Maharaj emphasized work also—work and worship, work and meditation. As he said, ‘With one hand hold on to God, and with the other hand work.’

While I was in Madras with him, and knowing how all the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna practised hard austerities, I was inclined to practise austerities too. So one day I asked his permission. He told me to go to such and such place, and he fixed a date for me to go. I didn’t realize at that time that he did not mean it, and so I made every arrangement to go. I had my blanket all folded and tied and ready, and when I came to say goodbye to him, he asked, ‘Where are you going?’ He got nervous like your own mother. He said, ‘The boy is going astray, running somewhere!’ And as if he could not manage alone, he said, ‘Get Tarak-da (Swami Shivananda).’

Maharaj told him, ‘You see, brother, what a foolish boy this is! He says he wants to practise austerities. What does he know about austerities? And why does he have to practise austerity? We have done all that for him!’ He went on talking for three hours, and all the swamis and brahmacharins of the Order came. For three hours he talked about many things of spiritual life. And then I followed Mahapurush Maharaj—Swami Shivananda—out and he said to me, ‘You poked the honeycomb; I learned many things I did not know.’

When Swami Shivananda became the next president, after Maharaj’s passing away, he never considered himself president. He had the shoes of Maharaj; he said, ‘He is the president.’ His brother disciples had such regard for him.

After my master’s passing away, I wanted to practise austerity in Almora, in the Himalayas, and Mahapurush Maharaj, who was then president of the order, gave me permission. I was getting ready when they called me back. The result was that I came to this country. So here they sent me to practise austerities!

You know, when Maharaj was practising hard austerities, there was another great soul who used to visit Sri Ramakrishna. He said to Maharaj, ‘Why

do you have to practise such austerities? Didn’t the Master do everything for you?’ He said, ‘Yes, that’s true, he did everything for us. But I want to make it my own.’

He lived in samadhi in the normal state. Once I was arguing with my brother disciples about some experiences or visions that Gopaler-Ma had. I said, ‘Of course those visions were in samadhi, when she was in ecstasy.’ Maharaj heard us arguing, and when he heard that, he came out of his room and said, ‘Ah, I see you have become omniscient!’ Then I said, ‘Maharaj, do you meant to say that with these eyes one can have such visions?’ He said, ‘Show me a line of demarcation where matter ends and spirit begins.’ You see, we don’t see the spirit, we don’t see God; we see matter. But there is no such thing as matter. When the eye of the spirit opens up, then everything is spirit. We have seen how Maharaj lived in that blissful consciousness and at the same time carried on his duties as the president of a vast organization.

When we first joined the monastery—we were the largest number of young boys to join, twenty-four of us at one time—one of the older disciples of Swamiji came to Maharaj. I was seated nearby and heard him say, ‘Maharaj, we must make some new rules for the conduct of these boys.’ Maharaj said, ‘But didn’t Swamiji make some rules already?’ ‘Yes, that’s true, but not enough.’ Then Maharaj said, ‘Look, you don’t need rules. Enough rules. What you need is to intensify your love for others.’ And so our order was founded on the basis of love. But now they have made rules and regulations. I am not aware of what they are.

Manasputra, *Spiritual Son*

Maharaj’s place amongst the disciples was unique. Swamiji was the chief disciple, and Maharaj was the spiritual son. When Swamiji went back from this country to India, the first thing he did was to give Maharaj all the money he had gotten to build a monastery. He said, ‘Now, this is your property. You keep it.’ And then he prostrated before him, saying, ‘The son of a guru is to be regarded as guru.’

And Maharaj also bowed down to Swamiji, saying, 'An elder brother is to be regarded as the same as the father.' That was the relationship they had. And you know, often when Sri Ramakrishna would look at Naren or Rakhal, he would go into samadhi, just seeing either of them. Just think of that!

Remember that Sri Ramakrishna had a vision about Maharaj before he came, that he was dancing with Sri Krishna. One day, when he prayed to Mother, 'Mother, bring me somebody who is like me,' he saw the Divine Mother Kali placing a little baby on his lap and saying, 'This is your son.' He was shocked and said, 'My son? Every woman is my mother, how can I have a son?' And the Divine Mother smiled and said, 'Not in that sense.' So he was regarded as *manasputra*, spiritual son.

Religion or God remains an unknown quantity. We have scriptures, but there must be living examples. The truth has to be demonstrated. These examples are the children of light, light themselves. Sri Ramakrishna used to say they are like doors and windows through which you peep into the Infinite. Before Maharaj passed away, he declared, 'I am the bridge that spans the chasm between man and God.' And of course liberation is very little. Maharaj taught us, 'Pray for devotion, pure devotion and supreme knowledge.' When you come to that, it is all the same.

One day I complained to him, 'You teach us in five minutes and then you don't do anything about it.' He said, 'How do you know? If you practise what I have taught you, you will find that you are receiving help.' This is the truth that I am telling you: the divine incarnations and their associates, these *ishvarakotis* or their associates, are still living. One can see them. They are still helping mankind. There is no barrier to him who

seeks that help, to whoever opens his heart. You see, there is good air on one side of a window, and bad air on the other side. Open the window. That is, if you begin to think of God and holy thoughts, you will find that you get greater help. If thoughts come to you, they become intensified.

A guru of the highest order can recognize the past, present, and future of the disciple. In the life of Sri Ramakrishna you find that he knew the past, present, and future of each of his disciples intuitively, and then he corroborated that intuition through other means. I know that Maharaj also did that. For instance, he touched a disciple, who began to talk and went on talking without knowing what he was talking about or for how long. Later he became conscious and realized that he had been talking to Maharaj for a long time, but he couldn't remember what he had said.

In the scriptures we read that a combination of three things is needed. One is human birth, another is longing for God or liberation, and another is the association or grace of a holy man. It is said that if you have the longing for liberation, then you meet your guru. But I must confess that I did not have any longing for God. It was the love of Maharaj that attracted me, and he infused that longing. That was the power that Maharaj embodied.

He said, 'Swamiji did not want wandering monks, like the thousands of monks all over India; he wanted you to realize God and at the same time do selfless service for mankind.'

In that connection he pointed out, 'Why make yourself restless to go here or there? He who finds him here—pointing to his own



heart—finds him everywhere; and if he does not find him here, he does not find him anywhere.’

The relationship between Swami Vivekananda and Maharaj was most touching. One night he came to Maharaj and said, ‘Raja, these young boys don’t know how to serve. I can’t sleep. You take the fan and fan me so I can sleep.’ And Maharaj fanned him all night. Swamiji slept deeply.

You know, till just before his passing away, Maharaj did not know his true nature as the shepherd boy of Vrindaban who danced with Sri Krishna—Sri Ramakrishna kept that secret from him because he knew that if Maharaj knew, he would go. At the last moment, he had that vision.

I had the opportunity of seeing him dancing in a big hall in Madras. Nobody was there and he was dancing as if he were holding somebody. As I looked, I felt such a thrill. But then, as he approached me, I felt a little nervous. I thought I was not pure enough, that he might lose that mood. So I closed the door and ran away. Later I thought I should have gone and prostrated before him and I could have received more blessings. Of course, I received plenty of blessings.

By learning to love one of the divine incarnations, one can attain divinity, perfection. Not only by loving one of them, but by loving any one of the *ishvarakotis*, the ever-free souls, one attains that. My master was an *ishvarakoti*. I remember once when I was arranging flowers in his room, he came and whispered into my ear, ‘Lovest thou me?’ I was completely paralysed. Through that he gave me some power, and then twice he said, ‘Love me.’

My Master did not care for study; he did not even pass the entrance examination. But his knowledge was unparalleled—on any subject whatsoever! An engineer would come and take some ideas from him. A businessman would come and take ideas from him. His intelligence was unparalleled. One time I was in the home of a well-known professor with Maharaj and Swami Turiyananda. The professor said to me, ‘You, being a graduate of the university, sit at his feet?’ I said, ‘Look here, Mister, what knowledge have you got? You have studied

some books and you have written a book, that’s all. But they are knowers of Brahman. BAs and MAs and PhDs should roll at their feet!’

When I was sent to this country, I was only twenty-nine years old. I asked Swami Shivananda, who was then the president, ‘What do I know?’ He said, ‘You have seen the son of God, you have seen God!’ I have seen religion transmitted through silence. Teachers of that type do more good to mankind than many preachers like myself, who become hoarse speaking. Yes, in silence, something is transmitted and you become renewed in spirit. I must say, it is not as easy as it sounds.

From the Heights of Samadhi

Any time we would feel that majestic greatness in Maharaj, he would do something, say something, and make us laugh and forget. Had that feeling continued in us, we could not have given him the personal service we had the privilege to give. He would be like one of us, he would come down to our plane and then give us a lift from there.

All of you are acquainted with the life of Christ, how multitudes followed him but only a few intimate disciples stuck by him. My master once said to us, ‘We have the eternal treasure to offer, but what do people come for? They come to us for potatoes and onions.’ How many really seek that eternal treasure? As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, we are enamoured by this Creation of God; very few want to know the Creator. Once Maharaj said to us, ‘They talk of the joy of life, but what can people of the world understand about the joy of life? Where is the joy of life? Only in that which is Infinite. In the Infinite alone is happiness; there is no happiness in the finite.’ He often said to us, ‘Give up the pleasures of a few days to attain that eternal joy, that abiding joy which knows no sorrow.’ He emphasized meditation. As in all scriptures and the precepts of all great teachers, he emphasized, ‘Seek for the eternal amongst the non-eternals of life. Seek for that highest abiding joy in the midst of the fleeting pleasures of life.’

(To be continued)

Vedanta-sara

Swami Bhaskareswarananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

39. *Īśvarasyeyam samaṣṭir-akhila-kāraṇatvāt-kāraṇaśarīram-ānanda-pracuratvāt-kośavad-ācchādatvāc-cānandamayakośaḥ sarvoparamatvāt-suṣuptirata eva sthūla-sūkṣma-prapañca-laya-sthānam-iti ca ucyate.*

This aggregate of ignorance associated with Ishvara is known as the ‘causal body’, on account of its being the cause of all, and as the ānandamaya-kośa (the blissful sheath), on account of its being full of bliss and covering [the Self] like a sheath; it is further known as the ‘cosmic sleep’, as into it everything is dissolved, and for this reason it is designated as ‘the state of dissolution of the gross and subtle phenomena’.

THE ORIGINAL MAYA IS the ānandamaya kośa of Brahman. It is called ānandamaya kośa, ‘blissful sheath’, because if by knowledge and meditation, or in deep sleep, you get merged into this kāraṇa śarīra, causal body, you experience peace and bliss from within. In the waking and dream state, the subject-object consciousness persists. Hence, there is always pleasure and pain. But in deep sleep a person feels relieved due to temporary suppression of the subject-object consciousness, together with all its reactions.

Every personality has two aspects: (i) external,

as in waking and dream states, where there is a play of the gross and subtle subject-object consciousness and its reactions; and (ii) internal, as in deep sleep or in meditation, when the world is completely forgotten, when you experience bliss from within. This is the ānandamaya kośa. It is the seed of the world, born of māyā-śakti. This is your causal personality, kāraṇa śarīra. The gross and the subtle universe get dissolved in this kāraṇa śarīra, the ānandamaya kośa, during deep meditation and deep sleep. As we proceed with spiritual practice, we get established in this jñāna-niṣṭhā, steadiness of knowledge, and attain nirvikalpa samādhi.

40. *Yathā vanasya vyaṣṭy-abhiprāyeṇa vrkṣā ityanekatva-vyapadeśo yathā vā jalāśayasya vyaṣṭy-abhiprāyeṇa jalāniti tathā-jñānasya vyaṣṭy-abhiprāyeṇa tad-anekatva-vyapadeśaḥ ‘indro māyābhiḥ puru-rūpa iyate’ ityādi-śruteḥ.*

As a forest, from the standpoint of the units that compose it, may be designated as ‘a number of trees’, and as a reservoir, from the same point of view, may be spoken of as ‘quantities of water’, so also ignorance when denoting separate units is spoken of as many, as in such Shruti passages as, ‘Indra through maya appears as of many forms’ (Rig Veda, 6.47.18).

The text comprises the edited notes of Swami Bhaskareswarananda’s classes on *Vedanta-sara*, conducted between 8 December 1954 and 20 January 1955. The notes—taken down by some residents of the Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur—have been edited and reconstructed by Swami Brahmeshananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Chandigarh.

The other name for ‘forest’ is ‘trees’. Likewise, the original Reality—or Ishvara with the original maya before lila, before Creation—is the same as the differentiated manifestation with all the jivas and their illusory forms. If you have this sense that the ultimate Reality, Brahman, is ever in you, then this

false 'I' will be transcended. The I-consciousness in every one is nothing but He. This is the illumination of the whole personality. By this you will get 'knowledge-full-surrender'.

The present subject-object consciousness is completely illusory. We, the knower, the subject, are zero; so is the world, the object: zero. Have this conviction; then the drag or pull of the world will automatically disappear.

**41. Atra vyasta-samasta-vyāpitvena
vyaṣṭi-samaṣṭitā-vyapadeśaḥ.**

Here the designations as 'individual' and 'collective' are on account of it [ignorance] pervading the units and the aggregate.

You may consider yourself intelligent and powerful, and tell, 'I can understand Vedantic truths', 'I am a meditator', 'I am a great sadhu and must be honoured', and similar things. But if you carefully examine such notions, you will find that God is the cause and you and everything in the world is his effect. If you understand this rightly, you will never be puffed up with pride and you will get a spirit of surrender. He is the cause of all your knowledge, power, and other virtues of which you are so proud. You consider them yours due to ignorance—*vyaṣṭi* and *samaṣṭi*, individual as well as collective.

Similarly, the sadhaka must know that every body is illusory, transitory, and has arisen from the original maya, *kāraṇa śarīra*. When due to spiritual practice the subject-object consciousness is forgotten, then God consciousness arises, followed by *jñāna-niṣṭhā* and finally by the knowledge of Brahman.

**42. Iyaṁ vyaṣṭir-nikṣṭopādhitayā
malina-sattva-pradhānā.**

This individual ignorance, on account of its association with the inferior being [jīva], is characterized by impure sattva.

**43. Etad-upahitaṁ caitanyam-
alpajñatvānīśvaratvādi-guṇakaṁ prājñā
ity-ucyate ekājñānāvabhāsakatvāt.**

Consciousness associated with this has limited knowledge and is devoid of the power of lordship; it is called prājñā on account of its being the illuminator of individual ignorance.

**44. Asya prājñatvam-aspaṣṭopādhitayānati-
prakāśakatvāt.**

It is called prājñā as it is deficient in illumination, on account of its association with a dull limiting adjunct.

**45. Asyāpiyam-ahaṅkāra-di-kāraṇatvāt-
kāraṇa-śarīram-ānanda-pracuratvāt-
kośavadācchādatvāc-cānandamayakośaḥ
sarvoparamatvāt-suṣuptir-ata eva sthūla-
sūkṣma-śarīra-prapañca-laya-sthānam-iti
ca ucyate.**

The individual ignorance associated with it is also known as the 'causal body' on account of its being the cause of egoism etc., and as the 'blissful sheath' because it is full of bliss and covers [the Self] like a sheath; it is further known as 'dreamless sleep', since into it everything is dissolved, and for this reason it is also designated as 'the state of dissolution of gross and subtle phenomena.'

The characteristics of *prājñā*, the consciousness of the jīva, is being described. It has maya's inferior expression: *nikṣṭa upādhi*. The jīva is running after money, name, fame, sense enjoyments all the twenty-four hours. Maya's hopeless impure expressions, *ati-malina*, are seen in you. Hence, do not get puffed up and do not consider yourself a great person.

The consciousness in you is *alpajñā*, having limited knowledge. You are always thinking in terms of 'I', 'we', 'my father', 'my mother', and the like; this is narrow consciousness. The other consciousness is *sarvajñā*, unlimited knowledge, which sees only the one Reality in all. Your ideal must be Ishvara with infinite Consciousness.

Viśva, taijasa, prājñā: There are three phases in your life. In the gross phase, the waking state, you remain occupied with, 'I', 'we', 'father', 'mother'—the

gross subject-object consciousness. Consciousness in this stage is called *viśva*. The impressions that this narrow and gross subject-object consciousness produces are expressed in dreams. The ‘body’ created out of these impressions is termed *taijasa*, dream state. The third aspect is seen in *suṣupti*, deep sleep. *Viśva* and *taijasa*, the gross and the subtle, waking and dream consciousness, and sub-consciousness—are all temporarily suppressed in deep sleep, *suṣupti*, the *prājña* stage.

Transcend the *viśva* personality by the knowledge that there is no subject-object difference in the world: there is only Brahman and its lila. When *viśva* is fully illumined and transcended, the impressions giving rise to dreams also go away gradually, and *taijasa* is transcended. Finally, one must also illumine the *prājña* personality, in which all impressions remain unexpressed, suppressed, during the state of deep sleep. Always remember that as long as you do not get the knowledge of Brahman, passion, anger, and other negative drives remain in invisible form. Know this and be cautious. An expert and practical monk understands that the suppressed tendencies lying in the *kāraṇa śarīra*, causal body, will at times come up again. Our calm state of mind is temporary. This will be followed by subject-object modification in the dream state, and then in the waking state. Go on with your spiritual practice and as long as you do not get the knowledge of Brahman do not be puffed up with pride.

46. Tadānīm-etāviśvara-prājñau caitanya-pradiptābhir-atisūkṣmābhir-ajñāna-vṛttibhir-ānandam-anubhavataḥ ‘ānandabhuk cetomukhaḥ prājñaḥ’ iti śruteḥ sukham-aham-asvāpsaṁ na kiñcid-avediṣaṁ-ityutthitasya-parāmarśopapatteśca.

In the state of dreamless sleep both Ishvara and prājña, through a very subtle function of ignorance illumined by Consciousness, enjoy happiness, as in the Shruti passage, ‘Prājña, the enjoyer of bliss, with Consciousness for its aid (is the third aspect)’ (Mandukya

Upanishad, 5); as also from such experience of a man awaking from dreamless asleep as, ‘I slept happily, I did not know anything.’

People experience peace when the subject-object consciousness and its modifications are suppressed. Hence, people seek it. To the extent this happiness and the *prājña* personality manifest, and the ‘I’ and ‘we’ are suppressed and suspended, to that extent will there be peace and bliss. For this, you need not go into deep sleep. Undertake spiritual practices, bring illumination by knowledge, and when the world will be completely suppressed, you will experience the blissful Lord within you. The locus of *brahma-jñāna* is within the heart of hearts, not outside.

(i) Consciousness at gross individual level is called *viśva*, whereas at collective level it is called Virat or Vaishvanara.

(ii) Consciousness at subtle individual level is called *taijasa*; and at cosmic level it is called Hiranyagarbha. In the *taijasa* personality there is a play of samskaras, impressions.

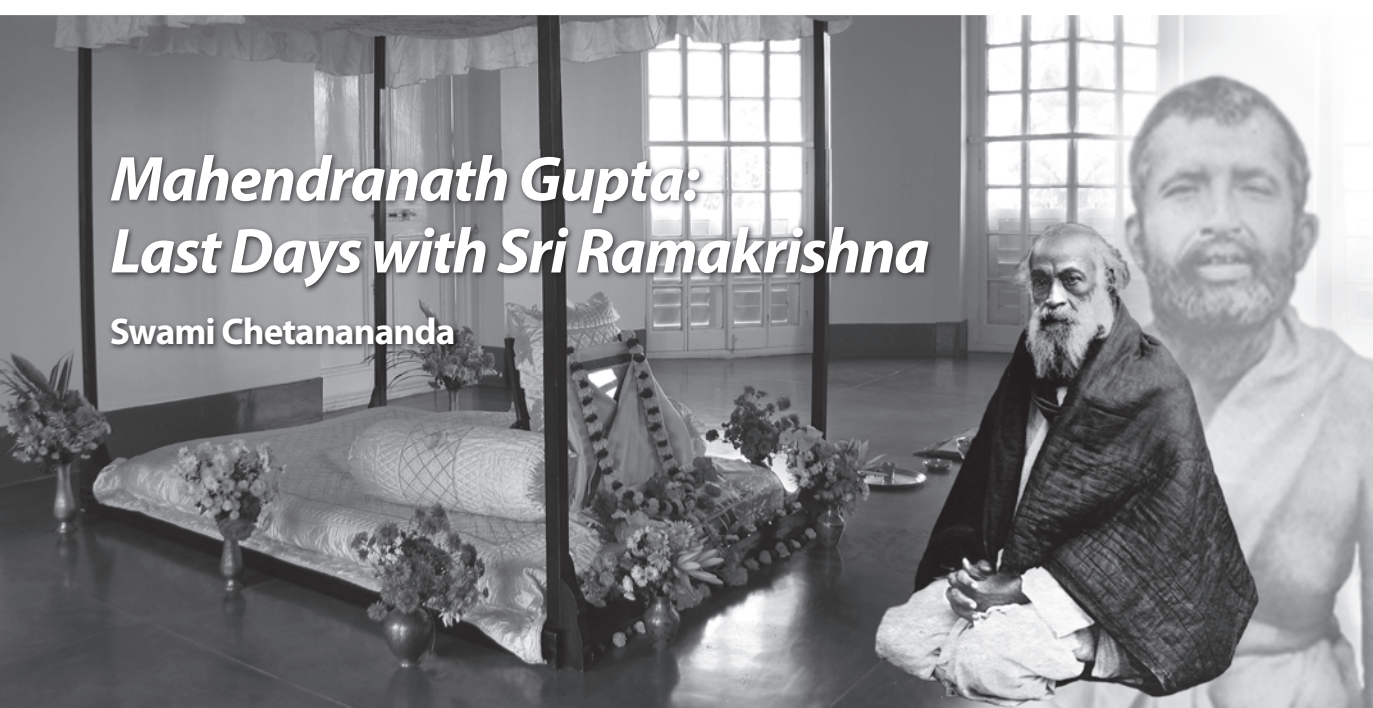
(iii) The third stage is *prājña*, characterized by undifferentiated ignorance. In it a person experiences peace, as the samskaras that make the personality are suppressed. There is, however, a difference between the ordinary person’s *prājña* personality and that of a spiritual aspirant. In a common person there is mere forgetfulness due to deep sleep or concentration on spouse, son, and the like; but a spiritual aspirant forgets everything due to meditation on God. Though the aspirant is still in maya, he experiences great bliss because this maya is illumined by consciousness, *caitanya-pradipta*. There is a glimpse of the divine, though the world remains in subtle form. For this reason it is called *cetomukha*, its face is towards the conscious waking state. So, the world and all its subject-object consciousness would again arise.

All the three phases of the personality are zero in themselves, and are dependent upon the Reality behind them. So, having acquired this knowledge, surrender to Him.

(To be continued)

Mahendranath Gupta: Last Days with Sri Ramakrishna

Swami Chetanananda



SRI RAMAKRISHNA WAS BORN ON 18 February 1836 and passed away on 16 August 1886. He enacted his divine play in three acts. The first act—1836 to 1852, his early life—he spent in his native village of Kamarpukur. The second—1852 to 1885, his adult life—he spent in Calcutta and nearby Dakshineswar, where he lived for thirty years. It was in Dakshineswar that he practised various sadhanas, attained illumination, and commenced his divine mission. In the third act—1885 to 1886—he spent the last months of his life in Calcutta and in nearby Kashipur, where he brought his divine drama to its close by laying the foundation for the future Ramakrishna Order.

In *Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play* Swami Saradananda wrote a detailed account of the Master's early life in Kamarpukur, his days in Calcutta and Dakshineswar, his sadhanas and spiritual experiences, his method of training his disciples, and his universal message to the world. Saradananda also wrote seven brief chapters describing the Master's life after he left Dakshineswar, but he was silent about his last days. Mahendranath Gupta, M, chronicled the Master's life from 26 February 1882 to 24 April 1886 in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Although there were many entries in the diary upon which he based the *Gospel*, M did not develop them all for publication.

In the *Gospel* we find twenty-seven entries—two undated—between 26 September 1885 and 24 April 1886. M also was reticent about writing on the Master's passing away. Although both Saradananda and M were asked to write about the Master's last days, they expressed their inability and unwillingness.

Swami Prabhananda wrote *Sri Ramakrishner Antyalila* (The Last Divine Play of Sri Ramakrishna) in Bengali in two volumes, which the Udbodhan Office published in 1985 and 1987. Prabhananda painstakingly extracted a colossal amount of information about the Master's last days from M's unpublished diary and other sources, but he could not supply a description of the Master's life between 26 May and 13 August 1886. Nonetheless, we shall present the highlights of the Master's last days from *Sri Ramakrishner Antyalila* and other sources, which show how M played a very important role in this chapter of the Master's life.

Sri Ramakrishna had promised Mathur that he would remain in Dakshineswar as long as his wife Jagadamba and son Dwarika were alive. But both of them had passed away by 1885,¹ so the Master was free to bid farewell to Dakshineswar. Sometime in April 1885 Sri Ramakrishna began to feel a slight pain in his throat. Despite his discomfort, on 26 May he attended the Vaishnava festival at Panihati.

When his pain became severe several doctors were consulted for treatment. They diagnosed his condition as 'clergyman's sore throat'. Though the doctors forbade Sri Ramakrishna to talk too much, he continued to teach. He never turned anybody away. He said: 'Let me be condemned to be born over and over again, even in the form of a dog, if so I can be of help to a single soul.'² Towards the end of September his throat began to haemorrhage, so the devotees arranged for his treatment in Calcutta, as his doctors lived nearby.

The anonymous biographer of the *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* wrote: 'There is a liquid beauty in the rising sun, there is a royal splendour in its midday blaze, and there is also an exquisite grace in its setting glow. So it is with the life of a great man. There is sweetness in its childhood and adolescence, there is resplendence in its maturity, and again there is a deep pathos in its last days.'³

Sri Ramakrishna left Dakshineswar on 26 September 1885 and stayed at Balaram's house in Baghbazar for seven days. Saradananda wrote:

These devotees had rented a small house on Durgacharan Mukherjee Street in Baghbazar because one could see the Ganges from its roof. Soon they brought the Master to Calcutta. The Master had been accustomed to living in the spacious temple garden of Dakshineswar on the Ganges, and when he entered this tiny house he declined to stay there; he immediately walked to Balaram's house on Ramkanta Basu Street. Balaram cordially received him and invited him to stay there until a suitable house could be found. The Master agreed.⁴

At Balaram's House

Saturday, 26 September 1885 • The Master came to Calcutta from Dakshineswar in the morning. He had lunch and dinner at Balaram's house, where he gargled with a medication that the doctor had prescribed. He said to M: 'I am coughing too much today.' M stayed in the Master's room that night.

Sunday, 27 September 1885 • In the morning Harish rubbed oil on the Master's body; then the Master took his bath. Afterwards, he went to see

Lord Jagannath in the shrine and returned to his room. M visited Sri Ramakrishna after working at his job as the headmaster of a school run by Ishwarachandra Vidyasagar. On this day the Master blessed a Vaishnava Babaji from Murshidabad by touching his chest.

Monday, 28 September 1885 • At 9.30 a.m. M visited the Master on his way to Vidyasagar's school. After bathing, the Master went to see Lord Jagannath in the shrine and then had some farina pudding, the only food he could eat. After M left for work, four famous Ayurvedic doctors—Gangaprasad, Gopimohan, Dwarikanath, and Navagopal—examined Sri Ramakrishna's throat and diagnosed his condition as cancer. At 4.30 p.m. M returned and informed the Master that Purna was coming. When Purna arrived the Master was happy to see him and gave him some refreshments. He then asked Purna to massage his feet—he would thus transmit power to his disciples.

Sri Ramakrishna was selective about whom he would allow to touch his feet. On 7 March 1885 he said to M: 'There is great significance in this [the stroking of his feet].' Placing his hand on his heart, the Master said: 'If there is anything here, then through this service the ignorance and illusion of the devotees will be completely destroyed.'⁵

Dr Pratap Majumdar visited the Master and gave him a homeopathic medicine.

Tuesday, 29 September 1885 • M visited Balaram's home in the morning and again in the afternoon.

Wednesday, 30 September 1885 • M came to see the Master on his way to Vidyasagar's school and learned about the house that had been rented in Shyampukur. Sri Ramakrishna asked M to check whether it was a damp place.

Thursday, 1 October 1885 • M visited Sri Ramakrishna on his way to Vidyasagar's school and stayed for an hour. He came back at 4.30 p.m. In the evening Pandit Shashadhar Tarkachudamani came to see the Master. M stayed with Sri Ramakrishna that night. The Master was in terrible pain and could not sleep. M fanned him.

Friday, 2 October 1885 • At 6.30 a.m. M bathed in the Ganga and upon his return he found the Master sleeping. At 7.00 a.m. the Master said to M, Balaram, and Gopal: 'This body has no desire, so why should I keep it?' When M was about to leave for work, Dr Gangaprasad Sen arrived and prescribed medicine. Then Dr Pratap Majumdar came to examine the Master's throat. Sri Ramakrishna said to him: 'Please visit me every morning.' M then left for Vidyasagar's school.

At the Shyampukur House

The devotees of Sri Ramakrishna rented a house at 55 Shyampukur Street in North Calcutta so that he could be cared for more easily. The house was not far from Balaram's and M's homes. Kalipada Ghosh took responsibility for cleaning and decorating it and all other tasks necessary to establish a household. He also hung pictures of gods and goddesses in the Master's bedroom, which was actually the parlour. Sri Ramakrishna came to the house on Friday evening, 2 October 1885. Ramchandra Datta lit a lantern to show the Master the holy pictures in his room. The Master went to see the dining room, where his attendants were eating their supper. Golap-ma took responsibility for cooking. Sri Ramakrishna asked M to make sure the windows were closed so that the cool air would not come into his room. He was happy and relieved.

Saturday, 3 October 1885 • M came in the morning and took care of some small things for the Master. He returned after work and noticed that Haripada was reading the Bhagavata to the Master. M stayed that night to serve him.

Sunday, 4 October 1885 • In the morning the Master asked M to buy two pitchers, two earthen pots, and two wooden seats for the household. Around 3.00 p.m. the Master haemorrhaged three times. This was the first such incident since he had arrived in Calcutta. Niranjan, Devendra, and others were alarmed, but Narendra consoled them. Rakhal, Latu, Shashi, Sharat, Niranjan, Baburam, Kali, Yogin, Senior Gopal, and others began to care for the Master round the clock, under Narendra's

leadership. Some of them would eat at their homes, but otherwise they lived with the Master, ignoring their parents' orders.

Monday, 5 October 1885 • M arrived at the Shyampukur house in the morning and found the Master in bed, with Niranjan massaging his feet. The Master then took his bath. He asked M to buy a comb for him. Dr Pratap Majumdar arrived, examined the Master, and prescribed some homeopathic medicines. Someone suggested calling Dr Mahendralal Sarkar, a reputable homeopathic physician, but the Master was not interested because Dr Sarkar had examined him earlier and had pressed his tongue too hard.

Dhirendra told the Master: 'Sir, M is such a great devotee, but his eight-year-old son died and his wife has lost her mind.' The Master remained silent and looked at M with compassion.

Tuesday, 6 October 1885 • M arrived at 8.00 a.m. and heard the Master saying: 'My throat feels as if it were cracking.' He was anxiously waiting for Dr Majumdar. Rakhal suggested rubbing old ghee—an Ayurvedic remedy—externally on the Master's throat and the Master consented. M left for Vidyasagar's school at 10.00 a.m. and returned at 2.00 p.m.

That afternoon Surendra came to Shyampukur for the first time. He told Sri Ramakrishna that he had not come earlier because it was hard for him to see his guru suffering.

At 7.00 p.m. the Master said: 'It feels as if someone were piercing my throat with a knife.' After talking for some time he asked: 'Can you tell me why I have pain near the ear?' It seemed the Master's cancer had spread into that area. Niranjan arrived and asked the devotees to leave so that the Master could rest.

Wednesday, 7 October 1885 • It was 10.00 a.m. Girish, M, and Senior Gopal were present in the Master's room. The Master again complained: 'It feels as if someone is stabbing the wound with a knife.' It was hard for him to swallow solid food. So far he had been eating rice gruel, farina, and milk. Girish suggested that he start drinking one and a half seers of milk, which would give him more strength.

Observing the Master's suffering Girish cried profusely. The Master consoled him, wiping tears from his own eyes.

After Girish left Sri Ramakrishna lay down and began to perspire. He was drowsy. Meanwhile Dr Majumdar arrived. Dharendra served the Master rice and milk for lunch. The Master asked: 'Why so much?'

M: 'Sir, it is good for you to eat a little more. Your body is weak.' The Master looked at M affectionately.

At 7.00 p.m. M returned with Prankrishna Mukhopadhyay. As there was no palm-leaf fan nearby, M began to fan the Master with a folded chadar. The Master motioned to Shashi to give a fan to M, who then fanned him with that palm-leaf fan.

Thursday, 8 October 1885 • M arrived in the afternoon. The Master told him: 'Tomorrow is Friday. I need a barber.' He then said: 'I feel excruciating pain. Will drinking milk make it worse?' M consoled him and told him not to worry. The Master

walked around his room and said: 'It hurts when I move.' He fell asleep at 7.30 p.m. as Devendra massaged his feet. M went home at 8.00 p.m.

Friday, 9 October 1885 • M arrived in the afternoon and found the Master asleep. Nandalal, Keshab Sen's nephew, was fanning him. After a while the Master got up. In the evening a monk visited the Master and the latter greeted him cordially. The Master was expecting Dr Biharilal Bhaduri and Dr Majumdar, but they did not come that day. Sri Ramakrishna asked M to lower the mosquito curtain around his bed. That night M stayed with the Master.

Saturday, 10 October 1885 • At 3.00 p.m. M arrived and found that the Master's bleeding had stopped. He was feeling better. Senior Gopal and Yogin arrived from Dakshineswar and the Master asked them: 'How is she [Holy Mother]?' Senior Gopal answered: 'She is fine. How are you?'

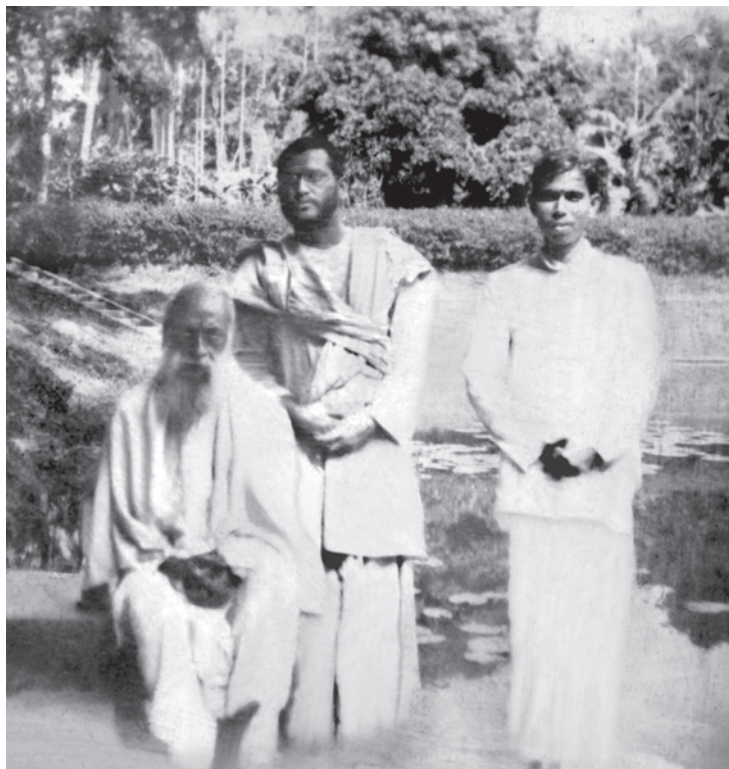
Purna visited the Master twice that day, which made the Master happy. M gave Senior Gopal one rupee to whitewash the Master's room in Dakshineswar and stayed the night to care for the Master.

◆ ◆ ◆

The following incident, recorded by Saradananda, probably took place during this period:

One day in Shyampukur the Master had an incredible vision. He saw his subtle body come out of his gross body and move around the room. He noticed some wounds on the back of its throat and was wondering how those wounds came to be, when the Divine Mother explained it to him: People who had committed various sins had become pure by touching him, thereby transferring their sins to his body and causing those wounds. At Dakshineswar the Master had sometimes told us that he would not hesitate to be born millions of times and suffer for the good of humanity. So it is not surprising that instead of being perturbed

Mahendranath Gupta, seated



by this vision, he narrated it to us joyfully. We were moved by thus remembering and discussing his infinite grace, and the devotees, especially the younger ones, made special efforts to ensure that no newcomers bowed down to the Master or touched his feet until he had recovered his health. Some devotees, remembering their previous wayward lives, resolved not to touch the Master's pure body again. Narendra and a few others heard of the Master's vision and found in it the truth of vicarious atonement [in which one voluntarily takes upon oneself the suffering caused by the sins of others], a fundamental doctrine of Christianity, Vaishnavism, and other faiths. They began to think about this and to explore its possibilities.⁶

Another interesting incident, involving a famous actress, took place during this time. Binodini, the actress, heard that the Master was ill and wanted to see him. The Master's visitors were very restricted; so she sought help from Kalipada, whom she knew through Girish. One evening she dressed herself as a European gentleman and went with Kalipada to see Sri Ramakrishna. The Master laughed when he learned who the 'European gentleman' really was. After praising Binodini's faith, devotion, and courage, the Master gave her some spiritual instructions and allowed her to touch his feet with her forehead. When they left the Master told the disciples about the trick that had been cleverly played on them.



Sunday, 11 October 1885 • After his morning bath, the Master began to laugh uninterruptedly. Everyone was puzzled. The Master said: 'This joyful laugh is coming from inside.'

That evening Sri Ramakrishna went into ecstasy for the first time at the Shyampukur house. Later, the Master said to M and others: 'You chant the name of Hari; perhaps that will reduce the disease.' Afterwards the devotees conferred and decided to engage Dr Mahendralal Sarkar to treat the Master. His fee was sixteen rupees. M was deputed to call on the doctor.

Monday, 12 October 1885 • Dr Sarkar had

been a famous allopathic doctor, but changed his speciality to homeopathy. As the Master's system was so delicate, he could not tolerate allopathic medicine.

Dr Sarkar had known Sri Ramakrishna long before as 'Mathur Babu's Paramahansa'. When M brought Dr Sarkar to Shyampukur, the Master greeted him respectfully. He checked the Master's pulse, examined his throat, and prescribed a homeopathic medicine. He took his fee of sixteen rupees at this first visit. However, when he later learned that the devotees were paying for the Master's treatment, he said: 'I shall treat him to the best of my ability, and to help you in your noble cause I won't accept any payment' (875). Dr Sarkar soon became very close to the Master.

M later said: 'The Master suffered from throat cancer for more than ten months. He had terrible haemorrhage from his wound, but the devotees served him wholeheartedly. Once, holding the doctor's hand, he plaintively said, "Please cure my disease". But as soon as he felt a little better, he would talk about God. Finally he said, "The Divine Mother will not keep this body anymore."... The entire report of the Master's illness is in my diary. I recorded the amount of blood from each haemorrhage, the intensity of his pain, what he ate, and other things. Every day I carried that report to Dr Mahendralal Sarkar.'⁷

(To be continued)

Notes and References

1. Dwarika died in 1878 and Jagadamba in 1880.
2. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1994), 258.
3. *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2002), 441.
4. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play*, trans. Swami Chetanananda (St Louis: Vedanta Society, 2003), 869.
5. M, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 719–20.
6. *Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play*, 900.
7. Swami Jagannathananda, *Srima-katha* (Bhubaneswar: Ramakrishna Math, 1953), 2.160, 2.163, 2.221.

REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications.



Human Development and its Quantification: A Holistic Approach

Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee

Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University, PO Belur Math, Dist. Howrah, 711 202. 2009. Website: www.rkmvu.ac.in. xii + 286 pp. Rs 200.

The monograph under review attempts to formulate a comprehensive Human Development Index (HDI) with quantification that covers all aspects of human existence. The author's postulate is based on Swami Vivekananda's Vedantic world view and its implications for human development. He believes that 'such a postulational approach to the problem makes our development [index] largely free from ad-hoceries that are present in some of the earlier developments' (6).

The 'Introduction' provides an excellent overview of the monograph. The author includes guiding outlines at the beginning and concluding remarks at the end of each chapter; these make the monograph reader-friendly, even when the chapters are otherwise scholarly, well referenced, and full of complex arguments.

The chapter on 'concepts and measures', in addition to providing a telescopic view of civilizational histories and the impact of European thought on human development, goes into the current systems of measuring HDI. National income measurements, before and after the use of purchasing power parity comparisons of relative incomes, are summarized. The chapter also discusses extensions and forerunners of the HDI yearly produced by the United Nations Development Programme. Amartya Sen's capability approach too is detailed and considered a step in the right direction.

Chapter Three is devoted to the enunciation of the author's basic postulate and its defence. The postulate is based on the principle of a unitive sentient 'existence' underlying the empirical world and termed 'Cosmic Self'. This existence is pure Consciousness;

all energy and all knowledge originates from it and manifests unequally in the empirical world. The individual Self—sentient, immutable, and free—is the very nature of every being; and this individual Self is identical with the Cosmic Self. The author supports his postulate with principles culled from several faith traditions as well as from recent advances in the physical sciences, but asserts that this is a postulate, pure and simple.

Chapters Four and Five deal with the implications that the basic postulate can have in the reformulation of the HDI, and for this two indexes are proposed and formalized: i) community-based outer development (*W*), and ii) individual's inner development (*I*). This is the author's original contribution in the whole thesis. The issues presented in these chapters are likely to invoke debate and suggestions for refinement of the indexes, provided the discussions do not get lost in polemics.

The first index of outer development is presented as an important precursor of the second one on inner development. Persons who are above the absolute poverty line, have access to health and education of the right kind, and are expected to reach sixty-five years of age are referred to as 'well conditioned'. The *W* index is based on the proportion of well conditioned persons in society. Higher the proportion of such persons in a given society, greater the outer development as measured by *W*. A subset of 'well conditioned' persons may be 'spiritually grown' as well, but only a small proportion of spiritually grown persons are also 'spiritually expanded'. These determine the *I* index. For computing *I* the following identifying characteristics are considered: i) spirit of oneness, ii) ambience of freedom, iii) spirit of equality, iv) absence of gender bias, v) creative activity, and vi) breadth of awareness. The author's computation of *W* and *I* is well reasoned, and it was originally published in *Sankhya* in 2008. The chosen variables for *W* bear a strong resemblance with aspects of HDI, but his approach is distinctly different in methodology and interpretation.

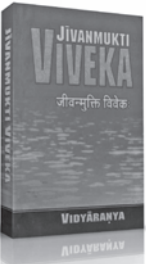
In Chapter Six statistical estimates of indexes *W* and *I*, computed from UN databases and other

sources for fifty-four countries, are reported and commented upon. Using Principal Component Analysis (PCA), weights are derived from the data. Estimates of *W* are comparable to HDI. Proxy variables chosen by the author are also consistent with postulates other than Vedantic.

The issues discussed by Chatterjee do add an important dimension to our thinking on quantification of human development, particularly through its proposed measure of inner development. Overall, the monograph is interesting, educative, and challenging for the specialists and enlightening for citizens. It opens up an alternative line of reasoning.

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***Jivanmukti Viveka* of Vidyaranya**

Trans. Swami Harshananda and
Dr H Ramachandra Swamy

Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai
600 004. Website: www.chennaiamath.org. 2009. x + 382 pp. Rs 90.

Swami Vidyaranya is a master compiler of auxiliary texts of Hinduism. A co-founder of the Vijayanagara Empire, he devoted his life to collating established concepts of Hinduism in general and Advaita Vedanta in particular. His seminal work *Panchadashi* is a compendium of the various disciplines of Advaita. Under the monastic name of Madhavacharya, he also wrote *Sarvadarshana Sangraha*, a treatise on various schools of philosophy. After taking the vows of renunciation he wrote the present work *Jivanmukti Viveka*, a compilation, which shows the path to Self-realization and consequent attainment of the state of *jivanmukta*, liberated-in-life.

The present book is an English rendition of Swami Harshananda's Kannada translation of the *Jivanmukti Viveka*. A senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and a scholar and author of repute, Swami Harshananda is currently the president of Ramakrishna Math, Bengaluru. The English translation is by Dr H Ramachandra Swamy, a philosopher in his own right.

The work is divided into five sections. The author's emphasis on renunciation is evident in the work beginning with a classification of monks. Each category of monks is explained with references from the Upa-

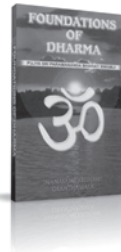
nishads and the Smritis. The nature of *jivanmukti* and the characteristics of a *jivanmukta* are detailed. In keeping with the traditional method of Indian philosophy, the author raises possible objections and gives appropriate clarifications. Succinct definitions of terms like *viveka*, *vairagya*, and *moksha* appear throughout the work. The work draws heavily from such texts as the *Yoga-vashishtha Ramayana* and the Mahabharata. Characteristics of persons with some accomplishment in spiritual life—the *videhamukta*, the *sthitaprajna*, a devotee, one who has transcended all the three *gunas*, a brahmana, one who has gone beyond the four stations of life—are explained.

The second section deals with methods to annihilate *vasanas*, desires. Though an avowed Advaitin, the author unhesitatingly quotes from the *Yoga Sutra*. Various disciplines for control of body and mind are prescribed. The text strongly condemns worldly life and recommends renunciation as an essential condition for spiritual life. Impure desires and attachment have been severely criticized. The third section deals with the dissolution of mind, leading to *jivanmukti*. Here, a forced control of the senses is condemned in favour of gradual restraint of desires. Importance of proper practice of *pranayama* and sitting in the correct posture is emphasized. Moderation in habits and subjugation of pride are recommended. Different types of breath control are discussed. Restraint of speech and right conduct are elaborated upon. The fourth section tells us who a *jivanmukta* is and the need to attain that state. The final section is about *vidvat sannyasa*, a state inferior to *jivanmukti*.

Though *Jivanmukti Viveka* is a compilation, the coherent collection makes it an auxiliary text nonpareil. This work will definitely intensify the spirit of renunciation in those who have already taken to spiritual life and will inspire the uninitiated to plunge into spiritual practices. This new edition is a useful guide for spiritual aspirants and a ready reference for students of Indian philosophy.

Swami Narasimhananda
Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata

BOOK RECEIVED



Foundations of Dharma

Pujya Sri Paramananda Bharati

Jnanasamvardhani Pratishthanam, 302,
3rd Floor, 33 M V Seetaramiah Road,
Gavipuram, Bengaluru 560 019. 2008.
131 pp. Rs 60.

REPORTS



Summer camp at Hyderabad

News from Branch Centres

Ramakrishna Mission, Colombo, organized from 12 to 13 June 2010 a free medical camp at Narahena and Rangala, Kandy, in which about 900 patients were treated.

On 22 and 23 June **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Guwahati**, conducted a medical camp during the Ambuvachi Mela at Kamakhya Dham in which 650 patients were treated.

Srimat Swami Prameyanandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the new students' home building at **Ramakrishna Mission, Shillong**, on 3 July.

Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University, Belur, celebrated its fifth anniversary and annual convocation on 4 July. Professor E C G Sudarshan, former Director, Centre for Particle Theory, Austin, and presently professor of physics, University of Texas, Austin, was the chief guest and delivered the convocation address. Professor G Bhamathi, former professor of physics, University of Madras, Chennai, was the guest of honour and handed over prizes to meritorious candidates. Swami Prabhananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, who is also the chancellor of the Vivekananda University, presided over the meeting and distributed certificates, degrees, and diplomas to students who successfully graduated from the Belur and Narendrapur campuses of the university.

Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur, has been conferred autonomous status by the University Grants Commission and the University of Calcutta.

The following centres conducted summer camps for children, which included chanting, bhajans, moral lessons, yogasanas, and other activities:

Centre	Duration	Participants
Belgaum	14 to 29 April	50 boys (class 8 to 10)
	1 to 10 May	85 boys (class 5 to 7)
Chennai Math	3 to 30 May	350 children (age 8 to 14)
Hyderabad	25 April to 22 May	1,080 children (age 8 to 15)
Kanpur	9 to 23 May	175 children (age 9 to 16)
Porbandar	1 May to 5 June	160 students (class 4 to 7)
Rajkot	3 to 28 May	73 children (age 7 to 13)
Visakhapatnam	26 April to 14 May	128 students (class 3 to 7)
	17 May to 4 June	82 students (class 3 to 7)

A newly set-up physiotherapy unit of the dispensary at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Kanpur**, was inaugurated on 4 July.

Relief

Distress Relief • **Porbandar** centre distributed 5,402 notebooks, 1,007 textbooks, and other items to 1,289 economically poor students in and around Porbandar. **Ulsoor** centre distributed 80,000 notebooks, 13,000 pens, 15,000 pencils, 15,000 erasers, 15,000 pencil sharpeners, 5,500 geometry boxes, and 2,000 slates to 15,497 students of 110 schools and 20 coaching centres in 105 villages of Karnataka.

Flood Rehabilitation • **Belgaum** centre continued the construction of 299 houses for the victims of the October 2009 flood at Gokak and Sindhanur taluks in Belgaum and Raichur districts respectively. Till July the centre had erected 121 houses up to the plinth level, 16 to the lintel level, and 59 to the roof level.

Pilgrim Service • **Puri Mission** served lemonade and drinking water to about 31,000 pilgrims during the Ratha Yatra festival and treated 142 patients in the medical camp organized for this occasion. The centre also served lemonade to about 800 pedestrians per day throughout the summer season.

